



THE INDEPENDENT

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FRIDAY 9 MAY 1997

WEATHER: Sun, scattered showers

(245p) 40p

IN THE TABLOID: STYLE
**THE WRONG
TROUSERS
-AVOID THEM**

IN THE TABLOID: 8 PAGES OF MUSIC
**THE LIGHTNING STRIKE
GOING HOME
TO FOOTBALL**

NEWS PAGE 10

The new power arrangers: Clare Short, Marjorie Mowlam, Robin Cook and Harriet Harman, Chris Smith and Frank Dobson arriving for the first Labour Cabinet meeting in 18 years

Photographs: David Rose

Cabinet of hope and hard work

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

Tony Blair and the Cabinet yesterday agreed the first Queen's Speech instalment of a radical new Labour agenda for Britain, and kept yet another promise by deciding to forego this year's Cabinet pay rise.

But the Prime Minister's office confirmed yesterday's *Exclusive* report that there would be no early legislation on open government. Action on cigarette advertising and a reform of the financing of political parties could also be stalled.

Having reminded Cabinet colleagues that the pledges made in the campaign would be at the heart of the Government programme, Mr Blair said: "There is hope and optimism out there; hard work to be done here."

The Cabinet, which broke with tradition and called each other by first names rather than by ministerial titles, agreed the Queen's Speech legislative package that will take the new government through to the autumn.

on next year. The full speech will be delivered at the State Opening of Parliament on Wednesday.

While the Prime Minister's office refused to confirm speculation that the package would contain about 20 Bills, there will be two Bills on education, one on health, another on crime and disorder, and another on the reforms to the Bank of England announced by Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer on Tuesday, along with an early Bill to set up the referendums on Scottish and Welsh devolution.

John Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister, said in Downing Street after the Cabinet had ended that he was very proud of the Queen's Speech.

"It reflects all those priorities that we had in the general election – of education, crime and jobs, decentralisation and devolution," he said.

"I am looking forward to implementing that programme and showing that a different government can make a difference. And that is what our Queen's Speech will reflect."

The Cabinet agreement to forego

Queen's speech: the key legislation

Education Bills - To reduce class sizes for 5, 6, and 7 year-olds, raise standards and tackle under-achievement. General Teaching Council to be established to raise the standing of the profession; stimulation of private finance for school renovation.

Health Bill - Reduction of bureaucracy surrounding internal market, aimed at diverting resources from administration into medical care.

Crime Bill - "Fast track" procedure to deal with persistent young

offenders. Probable measures to ensure delinquent children's parents take responsibility; action against disruptive neighbours.

Finance Bill - Changes to the Bank of England, as announced by the Chancellor this week.

Referendum Bill - to set up two referendums, on a parliament and tax-raising powers for Scotland, and on a Welsh assembly. To be followed by full-scale devolution Bills on setting up a Scottish parliament and a Welsh assembly.

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Crime Bill - "Fast track" procedure to deal with persistent young

during the day was on the commitment to open government that Mr Blair had enthused about only last year.

Following yesterday's *Independent* report that long-awaited legislation was to be delayed for another 18 months, with yet another White Paper to be published outlining Government views, there was confusion yesterday morning when Peter Mandelson, Minister without Portfolio, indicated that there might after all be legislation in the Queen's Speech.

Later, however, he told Sky News: "We have to bring forward a White Paper on it first of all. We can't just pull off some Bill from the shelf and introduce it straight away. But we're very committed to it."

That was not the view of Whitehall insiders, who said that Mr Mandelson was not at all committed to the legislation, described by one very senior source close to the Prime Minister as "the death of journalism".

The same source said there was no watering down of the commitment to legislation, but he said that min-

isters had been faced with two choices: either to enact the existing *Code of Practice on Access to Government Information*; or to spend time drawing up "meaningful" legislation.

In the meantime, he said, a Freedom of Information Unit would be set up under David Clark, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, in the Cabinet office.

Maurice Frankel, director of the Campaign for Freedom of Information, said: "If you give ministers two or three years to operate under the old rules, they will pick up bad habits which they will be reluctant to break."

Other question marks were also being raised last night over the Government's enthusiasm for the abolition of the right of hereditary peers to sit and vote in the House of Lords, and although Mr Blair yesterday welcomed a report on food safety, it was noted that there was no timescale for the creation of a Food Standards Agency.

Leading article, page 19
Suzanne Moore, page 21
Andrew Marr, page 21

Top Tories shy away from by-election

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

The Tories were facing the prospect of a further humiliating defeat and an increase in Labour's majority with a by-election in the normally safe Home Counties seat of Uxbridge, following the sudden death of Sir Michael Shersby, aged 64.

Friends of Michael Portillo were last night discounting any possibility of the former secre-

tary of state for defence running in the by-election to enable him to enter the Conservative Party leadership race.

"You will have to drag someone to stand," said one of Mr Portillo's friends. "With the voters in their current mood, we are likely to lose it."

Sir Michael had held the seat since 1972, but last Thursday saw his majority slashed by Labour from 13,179 to just 724.

His death at home, seven days after his narrow victory, added

to the Tory woes, reduced the total number of Conservative seats to 164 and increased Labour's majority to 178.

The threat of a further defeat by Labour is likely to put off other ex-cabinet ministers who lost their seats, such as Ian Lang, Michael Forsyth and Malcolm Rifkind.

The Tories are expected to try to hold off the by-election until the late summer.

That could revive the possibility of Chris Patten, the Gov-

ernor of Hong Kong, seeking a return to Westminster, but his friends said after presiding at the hand-over of the colony to China, he was planning to spend the summer in France writing a book on the tiger economies of the Far East.

Bill Cash, the ardent Eurosceptic, may join the leadership contest to force a more hostile policy to be adopted by the eventual winner against a federal Europe.

He fuelled speculation that

he may stand, although he has no chance of winning.

Stephen Dorrell, the former secretary of state for health, announced yesterday that he would be taking his leadership campaign to Scotland and Wales, where the Tories were wiped out in the general election.

The other camps were also reporting a surge in demand by Tory members in Scotland and Wales for their parties to be revived, possibly by a shift of pol-

icy under a new leader to engage in the devolved parliaments.

Lord Archer, who is backing Peter Lilley's stand for the leadership, echoed demands among party members for a change in the leadership rules to allow the grass-roots supporters to have a say in the choice of a leader.

It is too late to change the outcome now, but he said the Tories would be "in the wilderness" for years, if they did not make changes for the future.

Obituary, page 18

Tycoon gets 14 years for world's biggest fraud

Kim Sengupta

The world's biggest fraud trial ended yesterday in major controversy over Britain's legal aid system.

Abbas Gokal, convicted of a £1.2bn (£740m) fraud involving the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, was jailed for 14 years, as well as being fined a record £2.9m – a sum the Old Bailey court is convinced he can pay from millions he has secreted away.

The judge, Mr Justice Buxton, also awarded costs of £4.3m against the disgraced Pakistani shipping magnate – although this ordered was stayed until his assets can be traced by the authorities.

However, the court heard that Gokal, 61, had received £4m of taxpayers' money on legal aid to fund

his 125-day trial. Mr Justice Buxton said he was convinced Gokal had more than adequate funds to mount his own defence. However, he added that he would not pass any comment about the "appropriateness" of the legal aid board giving out money to Gokal.

Gokal was a close friend of Hassan Abedi, the late founder of BCCI. He was the biggest single borrower before banking authorities shut BCCI down in 1992 after discovering fraud amounting to £20bn. The Serious Fraud Office in London is convinced that Gokal and his associates have at least £100m hidden in a web of foreign bank accounts and shell companies.

Anthony Hacking QC, for the prosecution, told the court that after his arrest at Frankfurt airport

Fraudster jailed, page 22



Abbas Gokal: Jailed for 14 years after being convicted of a £1.2bn BCCI fraud

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news

significant shorts

Priest cleared of sexually abusing altar boys

A priest at the centre of altar boy sex abuse allegations was yesterday cleared by a jury of all 19 charges.

Relatives and supporters of Father Edward Kilpatrick, 53, sobbed with joy after the jury foreman read out the "Not guilty" verdicts at the end of the 13-day trial at Armagh Crown Court.

The cleric's two accusers, a 30-year-old civil servant, and a 32-year-old teacher who is a former student priest and a homosexual, were not in court to hear the verdicts.

Father Kilpatrick, a parish priest of Murlog, Co Donegal, is a former diocesan secretary to the now-retired Bishop of Derry Dr Edward Daly. The allegations of gross indecency and indecent assault dated back more than 20 years to when he was a curate in Steelstown parish, Londonderry.

Plea to pay human egg donors

Egg donors should be paid up to £450 for helping childless couples, the head of a leading fertility clinic said yesterday.

Professor Ian Craft, director of the London Gynaecology and Fertility Centre, said the current £15 fee plus travelling expenses allowed for donation was unrealistic in today's commercial world.

Egg donation for financial reward is forbidden in Britain. However, some critics claim this has led to a serious shortage of donors. The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, which licenses clinics, intends to phase out all payments for egg donation.

Tyneside weapons haul

An Uzi machine-gun was among a haul of weapons displayed yesterday as the fruits of an anti-crime drive.

The 51 firearms seized during Operation Rally in which police focused on known offenders on North Tyneside over the past nine months also included shotguns, pistols and rifles.

Some 66 people have been charged with a range of offences involving robbery, violent disorder, drugs, theft and firearms. The commander of Tynemouth police, Superintendent Jon Stoddart, said the operation had been instrumental in reducing crime by a quarter in his district so far this year - and by 17 per cent across the whole force area.

Gucci lover denies cruelty

The mistress of the late fashion millionaire Gucci yesterday pleaded not guilty to causing unnecessary suffering to 13 Arab horses at his former estate. Penny Armstrong, 28, denied 13 charges involving animals at Millfield Farm, Rusper, West Sussex. The former stable girl appeared before Horsham magistrates to deny 12 of the charges related to between 12 December 1996 and 2 January 1997, and another in December last year.

Teachers shall show humility

Teachers are being invited to obey a new code of values for their profession, including a commandment to admit they sometimes get things wrong.

The set of ethical principles, the first of its kind to be devised for the education service, is based on two years' work by universities responsible for teacher training.

Among the 11 commandments, published by the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers, are four calling on teachers to exercise humility towards others, including their pupils. They are told to recognise their own fallibility and be willing to admit they may be "mistaken in respect of knowledge and of behaviour".

A spokesman for the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers said teachers have one single commandment to offer: "Thou shalt listen to the voice of the classroom teacher."

Lucy Ward

Smokers' weight gain explained

Smokers who kick the habit and then gain weight may do so because they have a lower level of a hormone which controls appetite, according to new research.

Findings of a team based in Newcastle and Melbourne, Australia which are published in the latest issue of the *International Journal of Obesity* indicate that smokers have lower levels of leptin, which moderates hunger.

Smoking makes the appetite centre in the brains of smokers more sensitive to leptin so their appetite is suppressed. When a person stops smoking the brain becomes less receptive to leptin so they eat more which often results in weight gain. Glenda Cooper

Nazi gold in German bank vault

A Jewish organisation yesterday called for a search of German bank vaults after it emerged that two Nazi-looted bars of gold were transferred to the Bank of England as recently as last September.

The two bars were originally obtained by the Nazis in 1942 from the Bank of France where the Belgians had placed them for safe-keeping. The Deutsche Bundesbank found them last year and passed them to the Tripartite Gold Commission fund which was set up to oversee the return of the looted gold.

Louise Jury

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people



Jenny Hope: 'I hope things will be different and I can make a fresh start' (Photograph: PA)

Firefighter breaks the mould after sex harassment case

A woman firefighter yesterday took the highly unusual decision to return to her old job after winning compensation for sexual harassment.

Jenny Hope, who accepted £6,000 in an out-of-court settlement, said she was subjected to offensive behaviour and ridicule after joining the Bedfordshire and Luton Fire Service. Objectionable comments were made about her appearance and one male colleague even refused to speak to her, she said.

Ms Hope, a 31-year-old mother of two, said she was apprehensive about returning to work, but had received support from other firefighters in Bedford and thought that people had learned from their mistakes.

"I'm glad I've got the opportunity to go back. I hope things will be different and I can make a fresh start," she said.

Ms Hope, who has been on sick leave for eight months, told of her time in the service after joining two years ago: "I got the feeling that I wasn't wanted there because I was a woman. It seemed as if I had to justify myself all the time and in the end I lost my self-confidence.

"It went well beyond the normal banter you get in

the fire service. It was unpleasant and I was angry and upset at the time. All I ever wanted was for it to stop so I could get on with my job of being a firefighter."

Three firemen were given written warnings, sent on sex discrimination courses and moved to other fire stations following the complaints.

She hoped that other women who found themselves in similar situations could see it was possible to take their case to an industrial tribunal and still return to their jobs.

Bronwen Jenkins, of trade union solicitors Thompsons, said it was unusual for a woman in such a case to return to work. "Normally they suffer double jeopardy - sex discrimination and losing their job."

Ken Cameron, general secretary of the Fire Brigades Union, said he was delighted Ms Hope felt that she could go back to work. "By pursuing sexual harassment cases for members and negotiating proper equal opportunities procedures, we are beginning to change attitudes."

Paul Brown, deputy chief fire officer, said the brigade admitted no liability in the case and said the settlement was "amicable and productive".

Barrie Clement

Judge steps down with call for legal review

Judge Gerald Butler QC (right), one of Britain's most colourful and outspoken judges, retired yesterday with a call for a wide ranging overhaul of the legal system.

The senior judge at Southwark Crown Court in London for the past 13 years, he asked for an inquiry into how juries make decisions and questioned whether judges needed to sum up cases at the end of a trial.

Judge Butler, 66, has overseen a series of high profile cases, including those involving Liz Hurley, after she was mugged by a girl gang; pop star Sting, who memorably told how he "failed to notice" when his accountant siphoned off £690,000 from his current account as part of a multi-million pound fraud; TV comic Craig Charles, who was cleared of rape; and footballer Dennis Wise, who successfully appealed against a conviction for attacking a London cab driver.

He is also the only judge in living memory to order the arrest of a barrister in open court following a heated clash of views.

Addressing a gathering of barristers and judges at a formal farewell ceremony in his honour, he asked: "Why has there never been some inquiry and report as to what actually goes on in the jury room? If there were, we would

discover if our directions of law are understood and followed.

"For my part I believe there would be quite a few shocks if there were that inquiry."

He then questioned the need for judges to sum up at the end of cases, saying: "It has always seemed to me that is wholly unnecessary. All the jury need to be given are directions as to the law."

Judge Butler, who lists his interests in *Who's Who* as rugby, opera, Japanese pottery and walking, was called to the Bar in 1955 and moved on to the Bench in 1977 as a crown court Recorder. Five years later he was appointed a circuit judge, and in 1984 became senior judge at Southwark.

Lord Justice Auld, senior presiding judge in England and Wales, praised Judge Butler's "intellectual authority and robust common sense".

Heart operation for Heseltine

Michael Heseltine, the former deputy prime minister, who was admitted to hospital with heart trouble last weekend, underwent surgery yesterday to widen the arteries supplying blood to his heart.

The operation, known as an angioplasty, was carried out at the private Harley Street Clinic in London. In a brief statement last night, Dr Brian Mawhinney, the Tory party chairman, said the surgery had been a success. "He is resting comfortably and hopes to go home in a few days," he said.

The operation indicates that Mr Heseltine's condition is more serious than simple fatigue caused by the rigours of the election campaign. He had a heart attack in 1993 while on holiday in Venice but always insisted it was only a minor attack from which he had fully recovered.

Mr Heseltine underwent an angiogram this week, in which radio-opaque dye was injected into his heart which must have revealed a blockage. The angioplasty, which was necessary to clear it, involves threading a wire carrying a tiny balloon through the artery in the groin up to the heart. The balloon is then inflated, stretching the narrowed artery, before being withdrawn to allow the blood to flow.

Mr Heseltine withdrew from the Tory leadership race last Saturday, having been the bookies' favourite.

briefing

TRANSPORT**Traffic increase puts more pressure on motorways**

Britain's packed motorways are growing ever more busy, according to Government figures released yesterday.

Motorway traffic grew 3.9 per cent last year and these roads are now carrying more vehicles than other trunk routes, even though they make up only a quarter of the trunk road system. The Department of Transport statistics for 1996 also showed that overall motor traffic increased by 2.7 per cent.

Towards the end of their term in office, the Conservatives were moving away from the idea of building more roads to cope with traffic growth. Instead, they were concentrating more on schemes to make better use of existing highways, including many widening schemes, and trying to encourage more use of public transport.

The new Government is committed to an even more vigorous policy of "greening up" transport and promoting alternatives to the car.

HEALTH**Upsurge in abortions continues**

Abortions were still rising nearly a year after the 1995 scare over the contraceptive pill, according to the latest figures released by the Office for National Statistics. Between June and September last year there was a rise of 2,721 abortions for women resident in England and Wales, or 7.3 per cent, compared with the same period in the previous year. In total, 41,162 terminations were carried out.

The British Pregnancy Advisory Service, the main provider of abortion services outside the NHS, said it had seen an increase of 10.4 per cent over this period and warned it would take some time before numbers settled and returned to the steady decline that was evident before the Pill scare in October 1995.

"Many women remain unsettled and unsure about using the Pill, they need time to become confident again and importantly they need access to information which helps them understand exactly what the CSM announcement meant to them," said Carol Roberts, spokeswoman for BPAS. "Until women's confidence in the contraceptive pill returns, they will continue to use less effective methods of contraception and therefore increase their risk of getting pregnant."

Glenda Cooper

SOCIETY**Single life for homeowners**

The number of single people buying homes and living alone has almost trebled in 18 years, according to a survey published yesterday. A reduction in the amount of good quality homes for rent could partly explain the increase, said the Department of Environment.

Figures from the Office for National Statistics showed that the numbers had risen from 370,000 in 1977-78 to 1 million in 1995-96.

Younger people were said to be behind the increase, and the figures showed there were more than six times as many owner-occupiers aged under 45, who had never married, than in 1977-78.

Alan Holmans, a contributor to the report, said: "The sheer number of single men, and to a lesser extent women, behind the changes. And in parts of the country where house prices are lower, there are more owning and fewer renting."

The third report of the Survey of English Housing, based on interviews in 20,000 private households, also showed that 200,000 households took in lodgers.

**WEATHER****Cold truth about warmer climates**

Cold snaps can be fatally bad news for hot-blooded Italians and Greeks, according to a study which shows that death rates in warm countries rise faster as temperatures drop than they do in chillier regions. This is because people used to the heat forget to wrap up when the weather gets cold and do not heat their homes properly, it is suggested.

Researchers led by Professor WR Keatinge, from Queen Mary and Westfield College, London, investigated the link between death rate and temperature change in different parts of Europe.

The areas studied were northern Finland, southern Finland, south-western Germany, the Netherlands, London, northern Italy, Athens, and Palermo in Sicily.

Death rates for most regions were at their lowest when daily temperatures were around 18C (64.4F). The death rates then rose with each 1C drop in temperature, with the biggest increases seen in places that had mild winters.

In southern Finland, where the average winter temperature was -1C, mortality increased by 0.27% for each 1C fall from 18C.

But in Athens, where winters average 12.7C, the average mortality increase for each 1C fall from 18C was 2.15%.

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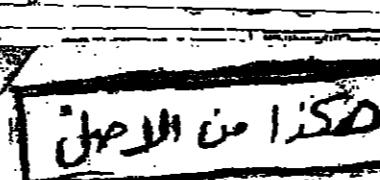
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Our ante-natal babysitter, by the parents of surrogate triplets



Delighted: Julie and Anthony Cohn. Photograph: PA

Glenda Cooper
Social Affairs Correspondent

It was a matching of opposites: the grandmother and the childless pair; the surgeon and the pub cook; the Orthodox Jewish couple and the Gentile mother.

But yesterday Julie and Anthony Cohn could not contain their gratitude for Anne Keep, the 41-year-old who acted as the surrogate mother of their triplets Albert, George and Henry. "I believed some wonderful thing would happen and it has," said Mr Cohn.

"We didn't think we would ever find anyone as wonderful and giving, as superb and selfless as Anne," said Mrs Cohn. "She is completely full of goodness and love."

Mrs Keep who has three grandchildren of her own acted as "ante-natal babysitter" after being put in touch with the Cohns through

Cots (Childlessness Overcome Through Surrogacy), which puts childless couples and surrogates together.

Overcoming odds of 1000-1, the triplets were conceived after doctors implanted two eggs taken from Mrs Cohn and fertilised with her husband's sperm. In Mrs Keep's womb, one of the eggs split into identical twins.

The children were born in hospital in Birmingham in March, weighing between two and three pounds each, but have doubled in weight after moving to the Royal Free Hospital in Hampstead, north-west London. Yesterday they giggled and cried as they hugged their tiny teddy bears.

Speaking for the first time since the birth the Cohns said they had struck up an instant rapport with Mrs Keep and would be keeping in close touch "for the rest of their

lives". Mrs Cohn, a 27-year-old lecturer who was born without a womb, said: "We have learnt so much from her about giving and about selflessness. She is a fantastic woman."

Mrs Keep was paid expenses. Commercial surrogacy was banned in Britain after Kim Cotten, Britain's first surrogate mother to go public, was paid £6,500 in 1985 to have a baby for an infertile couple.

The Cohns said they felt moral critics of surrogacy were unfair and failed to understand the plight of the childless couple. "The only surrogacy we really know about is the one we went through," said Mr Cohn.

"It was such a wonderful experience and has been such a positive thing. It has given us something we would never have been able to have otherwise."

His wife added: "It's unfair for people to comment on moral

grounds if they haven't gone through it. Anne is a person who has given so much. If anyone looked at our last year-and-a-half, they would see we have no qualms whatsoever."

Surrogacy and fertility treatment have been a vexed question in the Jewish community for some time. For the Orthodox, Jewishness is transmitted only through biological mothers. But it is not clear from traditional Jewish teaching whether a mother is the woman whose egg grows into a baby, or the woman whose womb nourishes it, if the two roles are separated as they are here.

Fraybin Gottlieb, assistant registrar at the London Beth Din, the court of the Chief Rabbi, said yesterday: "It is a very sensitive issue ... and one one which there are various opinions. There is no one single religious ruling either in this country or abroad."



Surrogate: Anne Keep, 41, who gave birth in March

The big question a computer cannot ask: Is Kasparov making the wrong moves?

William Hartson

What is Garry Kasparov playing at in New York? After four games of his chess match against the IBM computer, Deep Blue, he has scored a win, a loss and two draws. He should have drawn the game he lost – indeed, his game could still have been saved in the final position when he resigned – and he held a clear advantage in both drawn games. At the end of the fourth game yesterday, Kasparov said: "I believe it was a win ... but I was tired and I couldn't figure it out."

Is this really the man who has spread terror throughout the chess world for the past 12 years? Did Gary Kasparov ever resign a drawn position against Anatoly Karpov? Was he ever too tired to figure out how to beat Nigel Short? Two theories have emerged to explain Kasparov's unconvincing form in the match so far.

The rational explanation is that the world champion is finding it extremely difficult to adjust to the unfamiliar problems posed by a computer opponent. Human beings tend to miscalculate in tactically complex positions. When a position explodes into a sudden turmoil of possible captures, checks and brutal threats, the human mind turns to mush. But that is exactly where computers are at their strongest.

It is relatively simple for a programmer to instruct his machine to look at every possible sequence of captures and checks; and thinking at some 250 million moves a second, you can be fairly sure that Deep Blue will have sort-

ed out all the tactics by the time Kasparov has written down his previous move on the score sheet.

When there are no tactical opportunities, however – in blocked positions for example, or where the White and Black pieces have yet to meet in hand-to-hand combat – computers can only stumble through billions of possibilities, hoping that something good turns up.

In both the third and fourth games of this match, Deep Blue played some atrociously pointless, or gratuitously weakening moves when it did not un-

derstand what was happening, but once Kasparov developed direct threats, it found the perfect defences to counter them. Humans, when they start playing badly, generally have the good grace to continue doing so. Facing such a mixture of mindlessness and perfection is enough to throw anyone off balance.

But for anyone determined to reject so logical an explanation, there is a bizarre theory that has been advocated by some suspicious chess followers in the darker corners of the Internet. Just suppose a world chess champion

was challenged to a \$1m match by a large computer company. If he gave it too sound a thrashing, he would win the prize, but it would not come back for more.

The result of last year's match between Kasparov and Deep Blue turned out to be perfect for all concerned. Deep Blue won one game, which led to unparalleled publicity for its makers as well as encouraging them to believe their programming was on the right lines. There were two draws in the middle of the match, which sustained interest to the very end, then Kasparov ran away at the end with two contemptuously easy victories. The perfect plot. And the first four games this time have followed an identical pattern.

Has Kasparov been pulling his punches? Is he just toying with Deep Blue, in the knowledge that he can dispatch it to the junk yard whenever he chooses?

No, of course he isn't. But if he wins the last two games of the match, proponents of the alternative theory will take it as strong evidence for their case.

But there is a far stronger piece of evidence pointing to the opposite conclusion: if the expression on Kasparov's face was anything other than genuine anguish while he was being pushed around by Deep Blue in the second game, then he is an even better actor than he is a chessplayer. He is, on his usual form, a good enough player to polish off Deep Blue this weekend and take the \$700,000 winner's purse. And next year IBM will surely be back for more.



Quiet game: TV screens showing Garry Kasparov as he ponders his next move against IBM's Deep Blue. Photograph: AP



farmer climbs

the associated Indians and
the mean death rates in warm
countries, they do in chillier
ones. The staff forget to wrap up
and their skin becomes property.

News from Queen Mary
University, the link between death
and poverty in Europe.
Richard S. Finland,
London, northern Italy.

It is when daily
deaths rise
in the United States
average winter temperature
is about 10 °F below the average
in July. This was 1995.

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Failing British sit-coms in search of new Friends



In the can: A scene from Steptoe and Son (left), from Friends, and the sit-com artist par excellence, Tony Hancock

Paul McCann
Media Correspondent

Has Anyone Seen My Pussy? could only be a Channel 4 documentary. This one is about the use of innuendo in the British

situation comedy and is the centrepiece to a weekend-long celebration of the much-maligned television genre to be shown at the end of this month.

It will look at how the sit-com has developed and changed

over the years and will also examine the influence of America's massive output of sit-coms. A series of mini-sit-coms using the British alternative comedians Matt Lucas and Bob Mortimer will parody the US brand

of formula sit-com in shows called *My Gay Dads* and *I'm Bland Yet All My Friends Are Krazy*.

Stuart Cosgrove, Channel 4's controller of arts and entertainment, believes the

weekend is timely because of debate about the merits of British and American sit-coms and the popularity of shows such as *Friends* and *Frasier*.

He believes the success of US imports comes down to familiarity. He said: "Because sit-coms are about characters, they take time to work. People need to get to know the characters and their catch-phrases. Shows like *Only Fools and Horses* and *One Foot in the Grave* took until their third series to really take off."

"So while *Father Ted* is very much an authored work, written by two people, *Friends* is part of a Los Angeles sit-com industry and has 34 writers. That means you have eight episodes of *Father Ted* a year compared with 36 episodes a year of *Friends*. That in turn means US sit-coms can become familiar with the audience and take off very quickly."

This is one explanation, he believes, why the US's prime-time schedules are dominated by sit-coms, while it is drama and soaps that dominate in the UK. There, he says, they have made the investment in sit-

com, while here comedy budgets are being attracted to cheaper comedy game-show formats like *Have I Got News For You*."

A further difference was that here most critically acclaimed sit-coms had moved out of peak time to after the 9pm watershed. *Only One Foot in the Grave* and repeats of *Only Fools and Horses* remain in the centre of the mainstream.

Mr Cosgrove feels this is a function of British comedy writers turning their back on the cosy *Terry and June*-style suburban sit-com world.

"The closest to that form we have now is *One Foot in the Grave*," said Mr Cosgrove. "And it is very different."

"It is never explicitly stated, but the couple have lost a child at some time in the past, and it is as if they are just waiting to die. There is a much darker melancholy permeating the show than in traditional comedies."

Mr Cosgrove believes that the BBC's early Eighties hit *The Young Ones* marked a major sea-change in the kind of sit-com writers wanted to create.

"*The Young Ones* decon-



structed the rules of the sit-com with time-warp, people walking through walls and bands playing in the middle of the living room. *Father Ted* wouldn't exist without it – it is *The Young Ones* in a seminary.

"But it has to be remembered that the classic, timeless sit-coms, like *Steptoe and Son*, were never just the boul-

geoisie in their living-rooms." *Has Anyone Seen My Pussy?* explores how, by moving to later in the evening, sit-com writers could stop saying coconuts when they meant to say tits and how *The Young Ones* helped introduce a more up-front language that is used by shows like *Men Behaving Badly* or *Absolutely Fabulous*.

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Nuclear plant ordered to stop reprocessing

Nicholas Schoon

In an unprecedented move, Scotland's green watchdog yesterday ordered an immediate halt of a radioactive waste processing operation at the Dounreay nuclear plant on safety grounds.

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (Sepa) said AEA Technology, the formerly state-owned firm running the operation, was not able to accurately monitor levels of radioactivity in gasses and liquids discharged into the sea and air from the new, purpose-built plant in Caithness.

The waste in question is highly-volatile sodium, and it comes from Germany. Molten sodium is used as a coolant inside fast breeder reactors but it becomes radioactive as a result.

AEA Technology has contracted to convert several dozen tonnes of the resulting contaminated sodium into a safer, less radioactive form using chemical treatments which turn it into salt and water.

This processing operation produces gasses and liquids with very low levels of radioactivity which are discharged into

the sea and air. In issuing a legally binding prohibition notice the environment protection agency, an arm of government, also said it had doubts about the declared levels of radioactivity in the 86 tonnes of imported sodium.

The large Dounreay site is shared between the privatised AEA and the state-owned UK Atomic Energy Authority, both used to part of the same organisation.

A spokesman for AEA Technology said the agency's action arose out of information it had provided to the regulator. "We were surprised at this reactor to our full and fair disclosure ... we believe we can comply with all of the agency's requirements."

Sepa also believes that the importation of contaminated sodium may not have complied with laws covering waste imports. It says it is considering a prosecution.

AEA Technology says the shipments had been cleared by the German authorities, the Scottish Office and HM Industrial Pollution Inspectorate, when the contracts were arranged two years ago.

Blacked-up child sweeps 'snubbed'

by Blue Peter

The children's programme *Blue Peter* has been accused of "political correctness gone mad"

"Everyone knows the black faces of the sweeps represent just the soot. *Blue Peter* should not read things into something that is just not there."

A spokeswoman for Rochester City Council, which organises the festival, said: "Blue Peter did express an interest in taking part in the Rochester Sweeps Festival but to our disappointment decided to cancel their visit."

She added: "Blue Peter's decision obviously disappointed not just the council, but also the groups continuing the tradition of the dancing sweeps and individuals who were prepared to give up their time to help with filming."

"The event was covered by other TV crews who had no reservations about coming."

The council said the children had taken their inspiration from contemporary pictures of 19th century sweeps and descriptions by Dickens, who lived in Rochester during his last years.

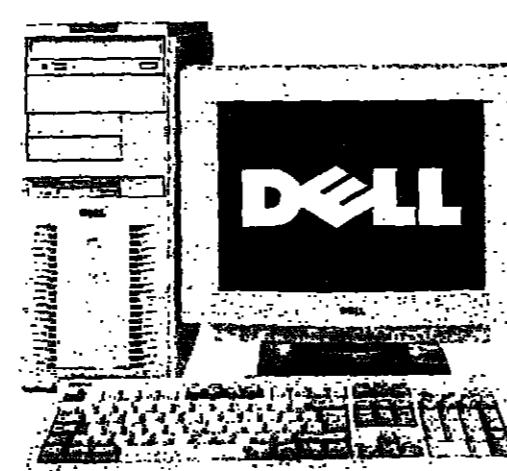
The event died out at the turn of the century but was revived by the City council in the 1980s as a tourist attraction.

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A million women help settle HRT doubts

Jeremy Lauance
Health Editor

The world's largest study of women's health, involving 1 million middle-aged British women, was launched yesterday to settle the argument about the risks and benefits of hormone replacement therapy.

One in three women in Britain aged 50-64 is not taking HRT to ease the symptoms of the menopause and its popularity has doubled since 1990. But doctors are still unsure what to tell women about the risks.

The treatment, once described as "the last frontier to the emancipation of women", is believed to cut the rate of heart disease but increase the risk of breast cancer. It is also regarded as a valuable defence against the bone-thinning disease osteoporosis but may raise the risk of blood clots.

Fears that it also increased the risk of endometrial cancer (of the lining of the womb) have receded since the introduction of combined preparations including progestogen.

The "Million Women" study will be run by the Imperial Cancer Research Fund with the National Health Service breast screening programme. Questionnaires will be sent to all women invited for screening, seeking details of their medical history and the HRT preparation they are taking. The women are aged 50-64.

Professor Valerie Beral, head of the ICRF's epidemiology unit at Oxford and principal co-ordinator of the study, said it was fears that HRT might increase the risk of breast cancer.

coupled with the huge number of women now taking it – up to 2 million in Britain – that made the investigation essential.

"Britain is the only country in the world that can carry out this study because it is the only one with a large population and a comprehensive national breast screening programme."

Professor Beral said the scale of the study, costing £1m, was necessary to give clear answers. The aim was to recruit 250,000 women by the end of the year and to meet the target of 1 million by 1999. About 6,000 of them are expected to have developed breast cancer by 1999 and a further 6,000 to have died of heart disease by 2002.

The first results are expected in five years. Professor Beral said: "We know there is nothing drastic going on with HRT. We hope this study will provide the facts so that when women are trying to figure out ... whether or not to take it they will have the information they need to choose."

Julieta Patnick, national co-ordinator of the NHS breast screening programme, said the effects of HRT were a major anxiety for women. "We get a million questions a year about it and unfortunately we don't know the answers. We never like to tell women anything without the evidence to back it up."

She said that if HRT increased the risk of breast cancer it could be because it delayed the menopause and the fall in hormone levels associated with it which reduces the incidence of cancer, or it could be because it delays changes in the breast tissue at menopause which reduce



Patient approach: Gilly Andrews, a nurse, says HRT has helped her 'hardly notice that the menopause has come or gone'. Photograph: Andrew Buurman

the effectiveness of screening.

The pre-menopausal breast has more glandular tissue which is denser, making it harder to spot cancers in screening. The study

would aim to answer these questions and whether the type of HRT made any difference.

Gilly Andrews, 49, a nurse who counsels patients on the

menopause, has been taking HRT for 10 years since having a hysterectomy. "It has been wonderful. I have no qualms or anxiety about it at all. I see myself slipping into middle age without ever noticing the menopause has come or gone."

She said she advised all her friends to take it and most had followed her example. "I don't know anyone in my personal circle who has tried it and given it up. For the vast majority of women it is the right choice."

The last frontier of emancipation



Miriam Stoppard: Ended 'intellectual decay'

Up to 2 million women in Britain are estimated to be taking HRT to fend off the hot flushes, night sweats and vaginal dryness associated with the menopause.

■ Dr Miriam Stoppard, the television presenter and author, said it stopped the "intellectual decay" she experienced at the menopause. Claire Rayner, the agony aunt, took it because of the hot flushes that "drove me potty". The novelist, Fay Weldon, and the Tory MP Teresa Gorman are also advocates of the treatment.

■ It may be taken as pills, patches attached to the skin, gels or as implants which last six months.

■ About 50 preparations are on the market, ranging in cost from £3 to £12 a month. HRT is only available on prescription and the cost is borne by the NHS.

■ The dose of oestrogen, the female hormone contained in HRT, is one-sixth of that contained in the contraceptive pill.

■ Initial side effects include nausea, breast tenderness and leg cramps.

Ceasefire call unites Blair and Bruton

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

Tony Blair and John Bruton, the Irish Prime Minister, united last night in demanding a "quality ceasefire" by the IRA before Sinn Fein can enter the resumed peace talks in Ulster by the democratic parties.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mo Mowlam, said the ball was in the IRA's court, but damped down hopes that Sinn Fein could be admitted by 3 June, when the all-party talks are due to resume in Belfast.

Unless there is a dramatic shift by the IRA, the talks will now resume without Sinn Fein, in spite of the election of two Sinn Fein MPs – Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness – in last week's election.

David Trimble, the Ulster Unionist leader, who also met Mr Blair 24 hours earlier, warned there could be a "tac-

tical manoeuvre" by the IRA in the hope of catching the two governments off balance but there would not be a genuine cessation of violence.

"The ball is in their court. I am not sure 3 June is a possibility," said Ms Mowlam after emerging from the talks between the Prime Minister and Mr Bruton in Downing Street, which she said had been "very useful".

She said both leaders were agreed about the need for Sinn Fein to be in the talks "but for that to happen, there has to be a ceasefire and there has to be a greater commitment in word and deed than we have seen in the past because of the atrocities we have experienced."

"It is the quality of the ceasefire that matters. We have said for sometime that the ball is in Sinn Fein's court. It is for them and the IRA to show us it is a quality ceasefire. I am not sure that 3 June is possible. What

matters is ... commitment."

Welcoming the fresh approach by Ms Mowlam and Mr Blair, Mr Bruton said: "We didn't expect there would be instant solutions. There was an immediate indication of a positive willingness to engage. That was most heartening and give positive hope to people in Northern Ireland."

There were hopes that their first meeting could breathe new life into the stalled peace process in Northern Ireland amid increased speculation that a renewed IRA ceasefire may be declared.

Downing Street had spent 24 hours damping down expectations of a breakthrough.

The Prime Minister's aides insisted it was a "getting to know you" meeting, with an opportunity to review Sinn Fein's support, and the threat of renewed violence in the marching season, and the local elections in Ulster later this month.

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queen's speech proposals

Education forms the centrepiece of

Anthony Bevins

Political Editor

Two education Bills will form the "centrepiece" of the Queen's Speech programme for the forthcoming parliamentary year.

After the first meeting of the new Cabinet

inset yesterday, the Prime Minister's Office said one education Bill would deal with class sizes. Because it would be short and specific, that might be expected to be through to the Statute Book by the end of the year.

The second education Bill would be about educational standards and what the

spokesman said would be a "the most far-reaching attack ever made on under-achievement in schools." It would include creation of a General Teaching Council, to raise the standing and morale of the profession; measures to deal with failing teachers, schools and education authorities;

and a stimulation of private finance for school renovation.

There will also be legislation to get rid of some of the bureaucratic apparatus attached to the internal market in the NHS. Labour hopes will help divert resources from administration into front-line

medical care. Early legislation is promised to accelerate the way in which persistent young offenders are dealt with by the criminal justice system. That Home Office legislation is also expected to include action to ensure parents of delinquent children face up to their responsibilities, and action

against noisy and disruptive neighbours.

The Queen's Speech will also include legislation to enact changes to the Bank of England, announced by Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, this week. A start on the promised welfare-to-work programme will be made in next month's Budget.

Quick end to assisted places

Lucy Ward
Education Correspondent

Two education Bills – one short and sharp, one more substantial – will be announced in the Queen's Speech next week.

The first Bill, to be moved on to the statute book as soon as possible, will deal with Labour's plans to abolish the assisted places scheme and use the cash to bring down primary school class sizes.

The Government is acting quickly in order to prevent independent schools making offers of assisted places for the 1998-9 academic year. All places already awarded will be honoured, but the money saved as the scheme is phased out will be used to ensure class sizes are no higher than 30 for five-, six- and seven-year-olds.

A White Paper to be published in June will address the core of Labour's education policy, centring on measures to raise standards in schools.

It will include moves to underpin planned improvements in literacy and numeracy to meet ambitious targets.

There will also be proposals for tackling failing schools and local education authorities, paving the way for Labour's "fresh start" policy under which inadequate schools would be closed and reopened under new leadership. The White Paper will also contain proposals for a general teaching council intended to help raise teachers' professional status.

The Bill, due in the autumn, will end grant-maintained status in schools and create a new

"foundation" status offering similar freedoms to those enjoyed by church schools.

There are also likely to be measures linked to Labour's plans to boost lifelong learning and training.

Moves to abolish the nursery voucher scheme are already underway and do not require legislation.

Meanwhile, cash will be found to fill a £69m "black hole" in this year's budget for further education colleges will be told.

Further education and sixth-form colleges feared they might not receive government funding they are owed for extra courses provided this term and last over and above their agreed workload.

The last government, after saying earlier this year it would not pay for the work, relented under pressure but failed to say where the money would come from before being voted out of office.

Now colleges, which are already under severe financial strain and are facing budget cuts from September, will have their £69m bill met using contingency cash from the Department for Education and Employment budget for 1997-8.

Department sources said the money had already been passed to the colleges quango, the Further Education Funding Council, ready for payment. The FEFC will contribute the remaining £15m of £85m earned by colleges since new year for unexpected expansion.

The decision provides no long-term comfort for a sector facing a £113m cut in its funding in the next academic year.



Street talk: John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, addressing journalists in Downing Street after the new government's first Cabinet meeting

Photograph: David Rose

Minimum wage promise to be fulfilled

Barrie Clement
Labour Editor

One of the key policies which will set apart the new government from the previous administration will be the establishment of a statutory minimum wage.

The Queen's Speech next Wednesday will set out plans for the creation of a Low Pay Com-

mission, under the chairmanship of an independent labour market expert.

Among the 15 commissioners will be representatives of both employers and employees' organisations, especially those representing sectors where pay is comparatively low.

It is hoped a recommendation on the rate will be made before the end of the year and that the new statutory minimum will come into operation in 1998.

The Speech will make clear that the wage will apply to all

employees, whether full or part-time, temporary or casual and whether they work from home. There will be no regional or sectoral rates.

Ian McCartney, Trade and Industry Minister, is also known to be keen that the rate should also apply to the long-term unemployed who take advantage of a new community work programme.

It is expected that the minimum – backed by a range of financial sanctions against

employers who pay workers below the statutory level – will be struck between £3 and £3.50 an hour.

The Labour Party calculates that £3bn of taxpayers' money is used to subsidise low wages through the payment of "in-work" benefits.

While the biggest unions are calling for a minimum set at half male median earnings – calculated at £4.26 an hour – the TUC has set its sights lower at around £4.

Ken Jackson, general secretary of the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union, warned this week at his union's annual conference in Jersey that the rate should not be too high for fear of sending a "shockwave" through the economy.

Mr Jackson stressed that his members – mostly skilled workers on relatively high wages – would seek to maintain their pay differentials over lower-paid colleagues.

Super-ministry takes shape

Christian Wolmar
Westminster Correspondent

Confusion about the structure of the combined Departments of Environment, Transport and the Regions remained high as ministers were allocated their responsibilities yesterday.

In particular, pressure groups and others affected by the work of the departments are unclear about which department will gain precedence over the other and whether a full merger is eventually envisaged.

Yesterday, John Prescott, in charge of the new combined ministry, told the BBC Radio 4 Today programme that as yet there were no immediate plans to merge the two, which were

united as one department throughout the 1970s, having been brought together by Ted Heath's government and separated by Margaret Thatcher's.

However, he left the door open to the possibility saying: "I have inherited two departments that have been operating separately and in some cases not even talking to each other, for a long time. Integrating the thinking, bringing them together, getting a structure of political decision-making is my first priority."

However, Mr Prescott declined to commit himself on integration, asking to be given "at least up to the summer to begin to make sure that we have got the right decisions."

He faces some tough ones as the transport crisis is likely to become exacerbated as a result of cuts in the road programme and a hiatus in rail investment.

There are inherent conflicts between the two departments. Under the previous system, the Department of the Environment used to have a team monitoring the work of the Department of Transport and insiders say that this type of duplication will no longer be necessary if the two departments are working together.

Transport groups are reassured by the fact that the Department of Transport has a minister, Gavin Strang, in addition to Mr Prescott in the Cabinet, while Michael Meacher, Mr

Prescott's number two in Environment, is not. However, Transport has only been given one junior minister in the Commons – Glenda Jackson, who consequently has a fearsome workload which includes London and integrated transport policy.

By contrast, Environment has four Commons ministers – Nick Raynsford, Angela Eagle, Richard Caborn and Hilary Armstrong – in addition to Messrs Prescott and Meacher.

However, environmental groups are keen to see integration. Lynn Sloman, deputy director of Transport 2000 said: "It's not a matter of the two departments just being brought together. You have to integrate their policies."

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THE INDEPENDENT

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queen's speech proposals

Labour's ambitious new programme

But as much attention will be paid at Westminster to the legislation that had been firmly expected – or trailed – but which was being damped down by the Prime Minister's Office last night.

Apart from the about-turn on freedom of information, it was said that a reference would be made to the Nolan Committee

Standards in Public Life about party political financing, with no early Bill, and that a ban on tobacco advertising would fall into the same category as freedom of information – no action for another 18 months.

It was unclear last night whether a food agency would be included in the Queen's

Speech, although expectations were raised when the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, said in a statement: "The public has the right to expect the very highest standards of good safety."

"Confidence in the safety of the food we eat has been severely undermined in recent years and I am determined to re-

build that trust." Mr Blair said that a food standards agency was needed, but no target was set for its creation.

Instead, the Prime Minister said that David Clark, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in the Cabinet Office, would chair a new ministerial group on food safety "to take forward these proposals."

He added: "In the interim, Dr Jack Cunningham, the Minister for Agriculture, has already acted to ensure greater openness in the working practices of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and more responsiveness to the needs of the public."

Opening his first Cabinet, Mr Blair reminded his colleagues that they had been elected on a New Labour ticket, and that they should govern as New Labour.

The pledges in the manifesto contract had been at the heart of the election campaign, he said, and they would be at the heart of government action.



Royal touch: Workmen repairing the Sovereign's Gate in the Houses of Parliament in preparation for the Queen's entrance next Wednesday
Photograph: John Voss

political shorts

London hospital closures halted

No further hospitals will close in London until a review of health services in the capital has been completed, it emerged yesterday.

The moratorium, which fulfils a Labour manifesto pledge and brings a ray of hope for threatened hospitals such as St Bartholomew's and Guy's, was disclosed by Frank Dobson, Secretary of State for Health, in an interview with his local paper, the *Hampstead and Highgate Express*, and later confirmed by the Department of Health.

He said no decisions would be made before completion of the review, expected by the end of the year.

But he appeared to pre-empt the review's findings by adding: "This government will not end up endorsing the previous Government's policy."

The number of hospital beds has fallen faster in London than elsewhere over the past decade but the number of patients treated from outside the capital has increased, counter to expectations when the NHS internal market was introduced in 1992, studies by the King's Fund, the health policy think tank, say. Jeremy Lauance

Cherie holds court

After the euphoric post-election celebrations and a snappy house move, it was business as usual for Cherie Booth yesterday. Ms Booth QC, made the 10-minute trip from Downing Street to the Royal Courts of Justice in order to make her first court appearance since the election.

In Court 72, the £200,000-a-year barrister, who specialises in public and employment law, greeted the packed press bench with good humour. "I'm glad you are all so keen to learn about employment law," she told them. Clare Garver

Leading article, page 19

Backbenchers' guide

Help is on hand for the hundreds of new MPs currently wandering the corridors of Westminster in a state of bewilderment. Old hand Paul Flynn's new book, *Commons Knowledge – How to be a Backbencher*, which is published today, is the latest in a line of manuals which profit by challenging the parliamentary culture of unwritten rules.

He advises on topics including "How to be Virtuous Bore", "How to Douginit" and "How to Climb the Greasy Pole". Mr Flynn, Backbencher of the Year in 1996, has a reputation for a no-nonsense approach. His chapter "How to convince Voters that the MP Never Stops Working", advises simply: "Never stop working." Ben Summers

Commons Knowledge, ISBN 1-85411-206-6, is published by Seren Books; £6.95.

Sir Ted leads the way

Sir Edward Heath, the former prime minister and the longest-serving MP, took the oath of the Commons for the fourteenth time yesterday. The process continues over the next few days for newer members, all of whom must swear or affirm allegiance to the Queen before they can sit in the House.

The right of the powers involved was once taken for granted, but neither God nor the Queen command the universal respect of the House any longer. Atheist members have had the right to affirm, rather than swear, their allegiance for some years. Many Labour members, and at least one Tory MP, took advantage of this yesterday.

Heads sent rallying cry

Headteachers in every school in England are today being urged to lay aside scepticism and join the crusade to raise standards in the classroom.

David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, is sending out letters to heads and chairs of governors in both state and independent schools hailing a "new beginning for the education service".

Pledging to set up "new machinery" for consultation to allow schools to make their views heard, he says the Government is interested in "what works" rather than dogma.

Labour is promoting the letter as evidence of its commitment both to listen to the teaching profession and to introduce "glasnost" within government. Lucy Ward

Food safety brief switches to health

Glenda Cooper
Consumer Affairs Correspondent

Responsibility for food safety should be taken away from the Ministry of Agriculture and given to health ministers to prioritise consumer interests, according to a blueprint for a food safety agency.

The report, laid before the Prime Minister yesterday, calls for a strong and independent Food and Health Commission which would have wide-ranging powers to combat food scares.

Tony Blair promised that the new agency would be "open, transparent and act in the interest of consumers" and said that he would be setting up a ministerial group on food safety to consider the proposals drawn up at his request by Professor Philip James, director of the Rowett Research Institute in Aberdeen. Legislation is expected to be included in next week's Queen's Speech.

Professor James said it was a matter of urgency to restore confidence in the way

food problems were handled. He said a target of three years should be set and that the new agency – which would have powers to act in all the recent food scares such as salmonella, E. coli and BSE as well as matters such as genetically modified food and pesticides – should report to Parliament through health rather than agriculture ministers. This would emphasise that its priority was the interests of consumers.

But he also recommended that other ministers, including the Minister of Agriculture, should be involved, in what he said was a new "axis" between Parliament and a public body. It was essential that the agency had teeth if it was to be an effective watchdog and that would mean having regulatory powers, the professor added. "It's clear from consultation we must have regulation. If you simply have an advisory group, given the concerns at the moment no one's going to think it's credible. You've got to be able to act," he said.

A period of about six weeks consultation is expected before plans are finalised. The structure of the agency would be a central commission of 10 food experts appointed by the Prime Minister or ministerial council. It would also include representatives from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

"We've set this up as a very powerful commission. Very high-powered scientists would be needed," said Professor James. "We're saying this is a commission which has to act on behalf of the public. This is not an anti-business commission. It must be clear and transparent."

Consumer groups welcomed the proposals. Ruth Evans, director of the National Consumer Council called it "a breath of fresh air after the secrecy within MAFF". And Tim Lang, professor of food policy at Thames Valley University, called the report a "milestone".

He said: "Consumers have been campaigning for a long time to have food regulation and promotion separated."

Private-finance hospitals head NHS priorities

Jeremy Lauance
Health Editor

Among the measures on the NHS likely to be included in the Queen's Speech, legislation to free the logjam of privately financed hospital projects tops the list.

Investors in projects such as the £173m Norfolk and Norwich hospital are holding back from giving the final go-ahead because of fears that NHS trusts may lack the legal power to enter the deals.

However, there are more fundamental worries about the viability of PFI deals in the NHS which have proved too expensive for some hospitals such as Guy's and St Thomas's where long-term commercial risks of redevelopment are high.

Labour ministers have examined the possibility of establishing a "health bank" – a non-government provident organisation which would raise funds to invest in hospitals.

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tory leadership

Clarke scents victory over divided right

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

Kenneth Clarke will lead the field in the first ballot for the Tory party leadership, according to his backers and other senior Party sources, who believe he will benefit from a split vote on the Conservative right wing.

William Hague remains the front runner with Michael Howard, the former Home Secretary, and is gathering votes on the centre-right. But a concerted whispering campaign to freeze out John Redwood is being mounted by all the rival camps for the party leadership. One right-wing supporter of Peter Lilley said: "Redwood would be a disaster and split the party."

The bitterness against Mr Redwood, who made himself a Cabinet outcast when he resigned to fight John Major in 1995, will make it difficult for a new leader to bring the Wokingham MP into the shadow Cabinet.

Mr Clarke's campaign will have to overcome a chaotic start, when his advisers were denied access to the Commons because their Treasury passes had been withdrawn. His campaign team had to move into temporary accommodation at the offices of the Tory Reform Group. The former Chancellor's team are counting on Mr Clarke sweeping more than 50 votes in the first round while the right-wing vote splits four ways between Mr Redwood, Mr Howard, Mr Hague and Mr Lilley.

Mr Clarke's expected lead will put pressure on Stephen Dorrell, the other candidate on the left, to throw his support behind Mr Clarke. "Dorrell has about 10 votes and we can only identify about eight of them," a Clarke supporter said.

The Clarke camp are expecting to gain momentum from the backing of Michael Heseltine in a fortnight, when he is fit again after the heart scare which ruled him out for the leadership. Although he is the one who is most feared by Labour, Mr Clarke still may not gain enough centre-right votes to win.

Mr Dorrell lost ground on the left by appearing to tilt to the Euro-sceptic right. Yesterday he moved again to keep open the option of joining a single currency in the long term. He said Tories should oppose joining the single currency, "unless long-term convergence is a proven and established fact." As that was unlikely, "we should simply make it clear that we are opposed to further consideration of the proposal".

Mr Dorrell also staked his campaign on the revival of Tory support in Scotland and Wales with a visit to Scottish Conservatives. He said in a speech to foreign journalists in London: "We have to show how our values and objectives are relevant to individual voters. We have to convince them the Conservative Party has listened to what it was told on the doorstep."

The Lilley camp began their campaign privately expecting not to win. But the backing of Gillian Shephard as a running mate and the support by Portillo fans who have been deprived of their candidate has given Mr Lilley's campaign more momentum. "He may not win, but it will secure his position as Shadow Chancellor," a supporter said.



Photographs: Nicola Kurtz, Tom Pilston, John Voss and Andrew Buaman

THE MEN WHO WOULD BE KING

MICHAEL HOWARD
Former Home Secretary, 55, right-wing loyalist under Major but campaigned inside Cabinet to rule out a single currency.
Campaign theme: I can beat Blair.
Campaign issues: opposes single currency and devolution; need to revive party in Scotland and Wales.
Campaign style: shifty - tried to stitch up Hague. Backers: Sir Michael Spicer (campaign manager), Francis Maude, David Maclean.
Odds: could pip Hague.

KENNETH CLARKE
Man on the Left, 56, former Chancellor.
Campaign theme: Steady Ken.
Campaign issues: his own handling of the economy; pro-European; a big hitter who could hurt Blair.
Style: Hush Puppies and cigars.
Backers: John Gummer, likely to include Michael Heseltine.
Odds: should win first round but Eurosceptic right might stop him.



STEPHEN DORRELL
Former Health Secretary, 45.
Campaign issues: anti-European currency, the Union.
Campaign style: cold fish, ex-colleagues say, but warming up.
Lost support on Left for appearing to trim to Eurosceptics.
Presentational skills would make him a powerful ally for Ken Clarke, who wants his votes.
Backers: David Pinner, ex-PHS, Peter Luff, Simon Burns, Graham Mather MEP and Tim Rycroft (his PR man).
Odds: best chance, to back Ken Clarke.

PETER LILLEY
The former Social Security Secretary, 53, launched campaign with a weekend newspaper article.
Campaign theme: I'm really Michael Portillo.
Style: Spitting Image had him in a Hitler Youth outfit, but he's nice, really.
Campaign themes: against single currency; cautious reform of the welfare state.
Backers: Gillian Shephard (running mate) and David Willets ex-chairman of Tory research department.
Odds: will fall in the second round.

WILLIAM HAGUE
Former Welsh Secretary, 38, a centre-right moderate.
Campaign theme: A Fresh Start.
Campaign issues: anti-single currency; need to bring more young people into the party.
Style: balding, fresh-faced youth.
Backers: Alan Duncan (his PR man), Jonathan Sayeed, James Arbuthnot (campaign manager), Julie Kirkbride.
Odds: could come through the middle to win.

JOHN REDWOOD
Ex-Welsh Secretary and head of Thatcher's policy unit, 45, ultra-brainy right-winger with a populist touch who challenged Major's leadership in 1995.
Campaign issues: opponent of single currency; seeks to restore Tory appeal on "one nation" issues.
Campaign theme: I'm not a Vulcan.
Style: wants to put "fun" back into Conservative politics.
Odds: may have to sue for a job with the winner.



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news

Britain's Cannes virgins bluff their way into the big time

David Lister
Arts News Editor

"It's the five o'clock scramble," explained Harriet Bass, chief executive of the New Producers' Alliance, which has 300 members in Cannes, many of them film makers selling their movies there for the first time.

Ms Bass and her staff are briefing the Brits on how to beat the system at the festival, and get themselves and their product noticed. First though they have to get fed and watered, hence the five o'clock scramble.

"I'm advising the Brits out here how to blag their way into the night parties," said Ms Bass. "It's the only way for many of them to eat and drink, when you remember a gin and tonic here can cost £5."

"They have to get those precious party tickets. The night screenings are always followed by a party, and it means running up and down the Croisette at 5pm and badgering the PR offices for tickets."

"And if you can't get tickets you have to blag your way in. It's easy if you're a girl because you

flirt with the doorman. If you can't do that then always have the name of someone high up on a particular film and say you are related to them. But make sure that their spouse or partner is not standing directly behind you."

More than 100 Cannes virgins went to a private Cannes Survival teach-in in London for a guide to serious networking "take an index box as well as normal business cards". They were particularly instructed to rehearse their pitch nightly in their hotel rooms "over and over again", and (in a style reminiscent of the Hollywood satirical film *The Player*) to be able to deliver it in three sentences.

"The whole of the world's film industry is squeezed into one street for 10 days," Harriet Bass told the nervous Cannes virgins. "You will be subjected to glamour and seediness."

The seediness, she said in Cannes yesterday, was the huge number of liggers and "triers on" desperate to be noticed. You see people come down full of hope and optimism and end up drunk in back street bars, after finding that no one

wanted to buy or see their movies."

Enjoying much greater success but rapidly running short of money is Tom Waller, 22, one of the youngest film makers in Cannes.

He has produced and directed *Monk Dawson*, a film about a Catholic priest's affair with a parishioner, which stars

a model-turned-actress, Paula Hamilton.

Yesterday Waller was on the Croisette, the Cannes sea front, giving postcards advertising his film's screening to likely buyers, reviewers, movers and shakers.

He was also juggling his finances so that he could escort Miss Hamilton in the style to

which she is accustomed, when she arrives for the round of interviews he has fixed up for her.

"I'm really here on a wing and a prayer," he said. "But I'm fixing things up so that when Paula does arrive she will at least feel like she's a minor celebrity."

"The problem is the expense. I'm going to have to end up paying for every coffee and every

drink she wants to buy. And buying drink here is extortionate. I'm sure they've put prices up because it's the 50th festival. I'll be drinking coke and I've just remembered Paula's off spirits, so that will help. But I've had to borrow money off my room mate, and credit cards are proving vital."

Andrew Curtis, an enter-

tainment lawyer and a co-chairman of the New Producers' Alliance, says it is not just film makers selling their wares in Cannes.

"Lawyers, particularly from the big London firms, go down and are very aggressive, approaching stars and trying to get new clients."

Cannes is a market where

producers, lawyers and corporate executives buy, sell, network and wheeler-deal round the clock, with mealtime providing no respite.

Indeed, a few years back two lines scribbled on the back of a restaurant napkin between a lawyer and his business client became the contract for *Nightmare on Elm Street*.



Players: Harriet Bass, left, and Victoria Lorkin, who are helping British film-makers work the Cannes publicity machine

Photograph: Brian Harris

School reviews security after gang rape claims

Jason Bennett
Crime Correspondent

A security review has been set up at a primary school where a nine-year-old girl was allegedly gang raped by five boys aged nine and 10.

The attack is believed to have taken place in toilets at the school in Shepherd's Bush, west London, on Tuesday afternoon.

Four 10-year-old boys and one aged nine were arrested and questioned about what happened, and were released on bail to return next month while detectives make more inquiries.

The girl is being given counselling while the other 176 pupils at the school are also being offered help.

schools – most notably at Dunblane – which have prompted new measures to make playgrounds safer. However most of the changes have been to prevent intruders entering schools.

The current debate about school violence was sparked by the murder of the headmaster Philip Lawrence, outside his school in Maida Vale, north-west London, in 1995.

However it was not until Thomas Hamilton's massacre of 16 children and a teacher at Dunblane last March that the Cullen inquiry was convened. It recommended that every school should have CCTV, panic buttons and personal alarms for teachers, but warned about turning schools into fortresses.

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Rail firm escapes £1m fine for delays

The rail company South West Trains has avoided a £1m fine after improving services last month, it was announced yesterday.

Run by the bus company Stagecoach, SWT attracted criticism for cancelling up to 39 trains a day in February and March after making 70 drivers redundant.

The rail franchising director John O'Brien said yesterday he would not be fining the company but warned SWT that it faced "financial penalties and further serious sanctions" if cancellations increased again.

SWT runs services out of London's Waterloo station to suburbs and as far south-west as Weymouth and Exeter.

The company agreed a redundancy package with drivers at the beginning of the year, but then ran into difficulties when other drivers needed to go on route-familiarisation courses.

"Passengers on SWT suffered an unacceptable level of cancellations in February and March and my priority was to see services restored to normal," said Mr O'Brien.

He said he would have imposed the special £1m fine if SWT had run less than 98.5 per cent of its services in April. But the company had run 99.6 per

cent of trains - which Mr O'Brien described as a "significant improvement". But he warned that if cancellations rose again above 1.5 per cent he would threaten penalties.

The £1m fine with which SWT was threatened was above the normal penalties which rail firms face for failing to meet monthly performance targets.

It had already been fined about £1m for its poor record in February and March.

The Transport Minister, Gavin Strang, said yesterday that he had asked for a report on "the shortcomings of the sanctions currently available to the regulators, to assist in our review of the railway".

He added: "The SWT episode supports our belief that the weapons available to the regulators are inadequate."

Train operators across the country are on warning: this government will not tolerate inadequate performance."

The Save Our Railways group said it was disappointed at Mr O'Brien's decision. Its co-ordinator, Jonathan Bray, said:

"The £1m fine always was a gimmick. For a while the franchise director posed as a tough regulator - now he's reverted back to being weak and ineffectual."



Given the bird: Peter Nicholas holds one of the aluminium gulls that was junks without his knowing at Cardiff airport. Photograph: Rob Stratton

Sculpted seagulls sent back to skip

Clare Garver

The seagulls in Peter Nicholas's sculpture wound up where they started: in a skip.

The famous sculpture of 42 seagulls, which has hung in the entrance to Cardiff Airport since 1970, began life as a sketch of seagulls circling a rubbish heap.

But a recent refurbishment of the airport resulted in the aluminium birds being thrown into a rubbish skip.

Mr Nicholas, 62, is asking anyone who laid their hands on a bird to bring it back to him so he can reassemble his sculpture.

The £4,000 commission for the sculpture in 1970 was the turning point in Mr Nicholas's career. "An international airport was a prize reference in a cv that was growing. I can no longer refer to it on my cv, except in a negative way," he said.

Mr Nicholas, a fellow of the Royal Society of British Sculptors, is pressing for a charter of artists' rights: "It shouldn't happen to anyone else." He is also demanding a full explanation from the airport authorities.

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DAILY POEM

Calais

By Glyn Maxwell

*They tin-opened his head.
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CALAIS across his brain
in red. Which should explain
the placement and pain
and focus that he felt,
that afternoon he smelt
its fuel-and-fishy air
then mulled it over in a square*

*like one who little girls
untasselling their hair
in French and combing it to curls
adore when he's thirteen.*

*who wonders what on earth they mean
and guesses and is wrong,
goes pink and carries on.
finds the ferry gone.*

On Monday, the Concordia ensemble will premiere *Cry*, which combines a specially commissioned sequence of poems by Glyn Maxwell with Elizabethan and Jacobean viol music. *Cry* will be performed at the Purcell Room, South Bank, London SE1 on 12 May at 7.30 pm, then at the Hay-on-Wye and Dartington literary festivals, on 26 May and 19 July respectively. It will also be available as a CD (Metronome Met CD 1020).

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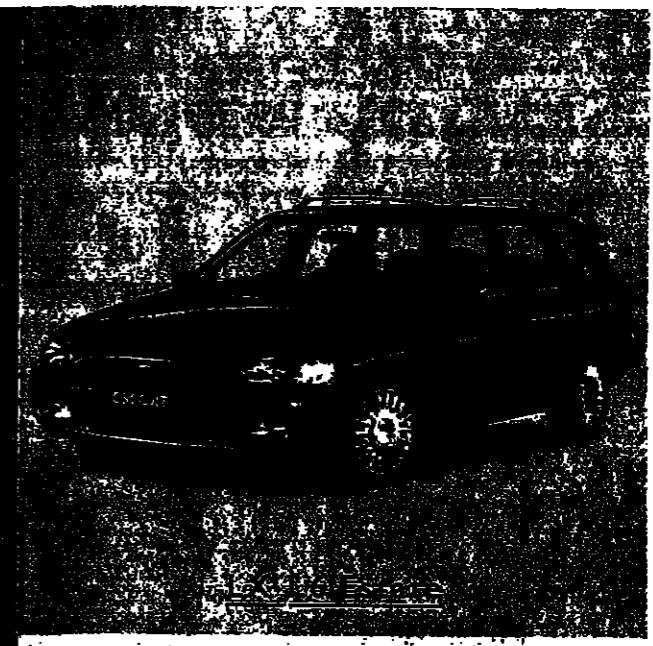
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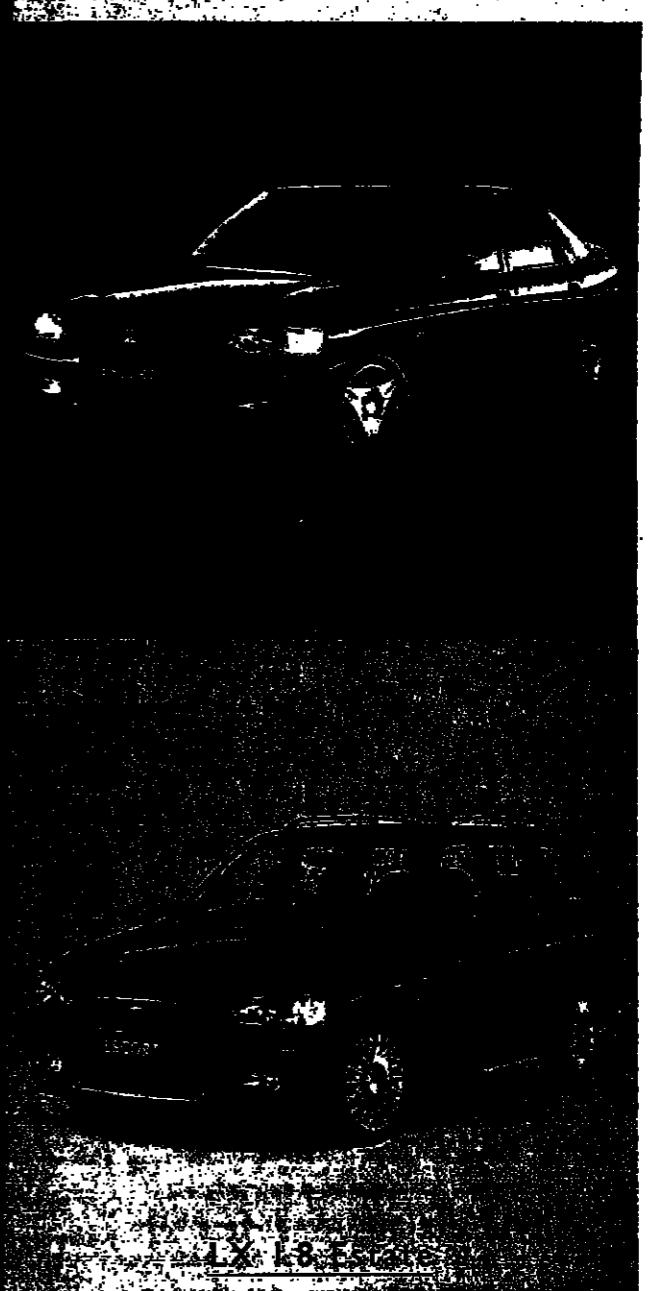
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Zaire crisis: Capital awaits sceptically for Mobutu's return as rebels close in



Health drive: A nurse prepares an injection as a doctor explains vaccination to patients at a Catholic-run clinic in Kinshasa

Photograph: Reuters

Dictator's acolytes deny he is quitting

Mary Braid
Kinshasa

Outeniqua, a South African supply ship, last weekend.

Yesterday a South African government source said there would be a second round of talks next week, within the eight-to-10 day consultation period announced by President Nelson Mandela, who presided over the *Outeniqua* summit.

As the city waited for Mr Mobutu not to show, the confused whirl of international peace initiatives continued, with Bill Richardson, US ambassador to the UN, flying to Paris to enlist French support for US peace efforts. But time is running out as the rebels continue their advance on Kinshasa.

Two days ago they captured Kenge, 200km east of Kinshasa, on the only passable route to the capital. But Mr Kabila's forces encountered perhaps the fiercest resistance since the war began. Up to 100 Zairean soldiers and 200 civilians may have died in the latter stages of a conflict which has generally

avoided large loss of life. A spokesman for the International Committee of the Red Cross in Kinshasa said 10 local Red Cross workers were killed in the fighting. The civilians are believed to have been killed by retreating government troops. A charity worker claimed yesterday that many local people were murdered before the rebels even entered town.

The rebels' claim to have forces within 60km of the city but neither diplomats nor locals believe them. "It's the same old pattern," said Jean-Pierre, a lecturer, who was in Bukavu, eastern Zaire, in October, when the rebellion began. "They wear down the army by making them nervous, then resistance melts before they even reach town."

No one doubts the rebels' pattern is the same. What is uncertain is how tens of thousands of Zairean troops at a dozen camps in and around Kinshasa will react to a rebel attack now there is nowhere left to run.

The South African Deputy President, Thabo Mbeki, at least must believe he is returning. Mr Mbeki is expected to fly to Kinshasa this afternoon to meet Mr Mobutu to try to keep talks between the dictator and the rebel leader alive, after their messy start on board the

rebel leader, Laurent Kabila.

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The South African Deputy</p

international

Would you buy a lighter from the Great

He may make a good cushion, but **Teresa Poole** in Peking asks whether Mao is politically correct

It is 1997. Hong Kong is being returned to the mainland, and with the world spotlight on the handover, Chinoiserie is in vogue. Western magazines and newspapers feature beautiful Chinese brocade clothes, reproduction Qing dynasty furniture, and Chinese art and ceramics. And in those stylishly designed room sets, it is not unusual to find one familiar face staring out from somewhere on the page. Two decades after his death, Chairman Mao Tse Tung has found a new and surprising role as a design accessory.

In the West, one can buy cushion covers with the Great Helmsman's face, and Mao T-shirts. For those visiting China and looking for something a little more authentic, there are "Little Red Books", Mao propaganda posters, and other Cultural Revolution memorabilia. And for modern-day tacky souvenirs, one cannot beat the

Mao cigarette lighters which play the tune "The East is Red". Mao room thermometers, Mao plates and cups, and for one's desk, a Mao penholder, and so on.

In Peking's "antique" markets, Western tourists eagerly haggle over such trinkets. The same people would not, of course, for one moment even consider buying a Stalin cigarette lighter, or a Hitler room thermometer. But in the pantheon of world tyrants whose policies resulted in the deaths of millions, Mao memorabilia manages still to be considered chic, or at least amusing.

Someone eating a sandwich off of a Mao plate will probably not dwell on the 30 million Chinese who died in the famine caused by Mao's insane Great Leap Forward in the late Fifties. Arranging one's collection of Mao cushions, it is best to forget that when Mao launched the Cul-



Photograph: Thurston David/Gamma

Heads up: Wang Anting, a Mao collector in Chengdu, has assembled a remarkable collection of Mao memorabilia

tural Revolution in 1966, anyone who inadvertently sat on a newspaper with a Mao photograph lurking on an inside page was in danger of being thrashed to within an inch of their lives

by the Red Guards as a punishment for such disrespect.

One might imagine that the present-day Chinese propaganda machine, which keeps strict control over the repro-

duction of Mao's face and calligraphy within China, would frown on the use of Mao as a design motif in the West. But they have a different viewpoint. Liu Min, at the Chinese Communist Party's Department for Research on Party Literature, is sanguine. He said: "Mike Tyson tattoos Mao's face on his arm. That expresses his understanding of Mao." "We

wish people outside China can have a wider knowledge of Mao," says Mr Liu. "It is said Tyson regards Mao as a God, he believes Mao can protect him in the ring, he worships Mao. He understands Mao from his own point of view."

Mr Liu does admit, however, with some regret that "the knowledge of Mao by foreigners is probably limited". In the

Yeltsin tries doublethink on Nato

Christopher Bellamy
Defence Correspondent

President Boris Yeltsin is exhibiting apparent symptoms of political schizophrenia. Yesterday he said a treaty on Nato-Russian relations was "98 per cent ready", and that he might join Moscow talks in person next week to hammer out the last two per cent. Then, almost simultaneously, he said that the plans for Nato's expansion are the most serious dispute between Russia and the US since the 1962 Cuban missile crisis.

The first comment was, admittedly, aimed at foreign reporters, the second at Russians on Russian television. But the apparently contradictory remarks may indicate a well-tried and traditional strategy - splitting the US from its European Nato allies. The US, represented by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, has been adamant there should be no conditions on Nato's enlargement to embrace new members - probably Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. The US insists Nato must refuse to pledge that there will be no nuclear weapons or foreign troops in new members' territories - even though it has no such plans. The Europeans are more inclined to compromise, understanding Russian concerns.

"Since the Cuban crisis there hasn't been such a sharp issue in relations between Russia and the US, which concern Russia's interests to the degree that everyone should think about it, including Americans and Europeans," Mr Yeltsin said. "It's essential that we take part in all Nato decision-making." That is unacceptable to the US, who insist that although Russia will be able to observe Nato business, it must not have a veto.

Mr Yeltsin's remarks fol-

lowed two days of discussions between Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov and Nato Secretary-General Javier Solana. Mr Yeltsin said he wanted them to sort out their remaining differences at their next meeting in Moscow on 13 May so as to make it possible to sign the Nato-Russia "Charter" before the summit in Madrid on 8-9 July, at which the invitations to new members are to be issued, possibly as early as 27 May.

Mr Yeltsin was laying a wreath at the tomb of the unknown soldier on the 52nd anniversary of the Allied Victory in Europe. "The main thing now is to ensure Russia's part in Nato decision-making processes," he said. "We also want them not to move their forces into the new territories, including nuclear weapons."

Leading Nato countries, including the US, insist that such a pledge would give the new members a second-class status in Nato. But Nato no longer relies on short-range nuclear weapons, and has no plans or need to station foreign forces on new members' territory. All Nato membership will mean is a few liaison officers at new members' headquarters - and the Russians are likely to have liaison officers there as well.

The Russian view has been coloured by its experience of the now defunct Warsaw Pact, where the Soviet Union dominated the military structure of other member states, and had large Soviet contingents, including short and medium-range nuclear weapons stationed on their territory. Nato, an alliance of sovereign states, operated and operates quite differently.

As yet, no one has devised a formula which closes the gap between the Russian and the Nato positions.

Abuse claims heap pressure on Banana

Harare, Zimbabwe (AP) — Students, football players and soldiers have told police of sexual harassment by former President Canaan Banana, already under investigation for alleged homosexual rape, a newspaper reported yesterday.

The independent business weekly *The Financial Gazette* said dozens of male complainants reported to a panel of police investigators, who declared eight new cases of harassment by Banana were believed genuine so far. The newspaper quoted an unidentified senior police official as saying allegations of Banana's predatory homosexuality "continue to pour in".

Officials at police headquarters did not return reporters' calls yesterday. Banana, 61, a Methodist theologian, academic and diplomat, is under police investigation for the alleged rape of a police aide when he was the nation's titular president after independence in 1980.

Police Inspector Jefia Dube, 36, was jailed for 10 years in

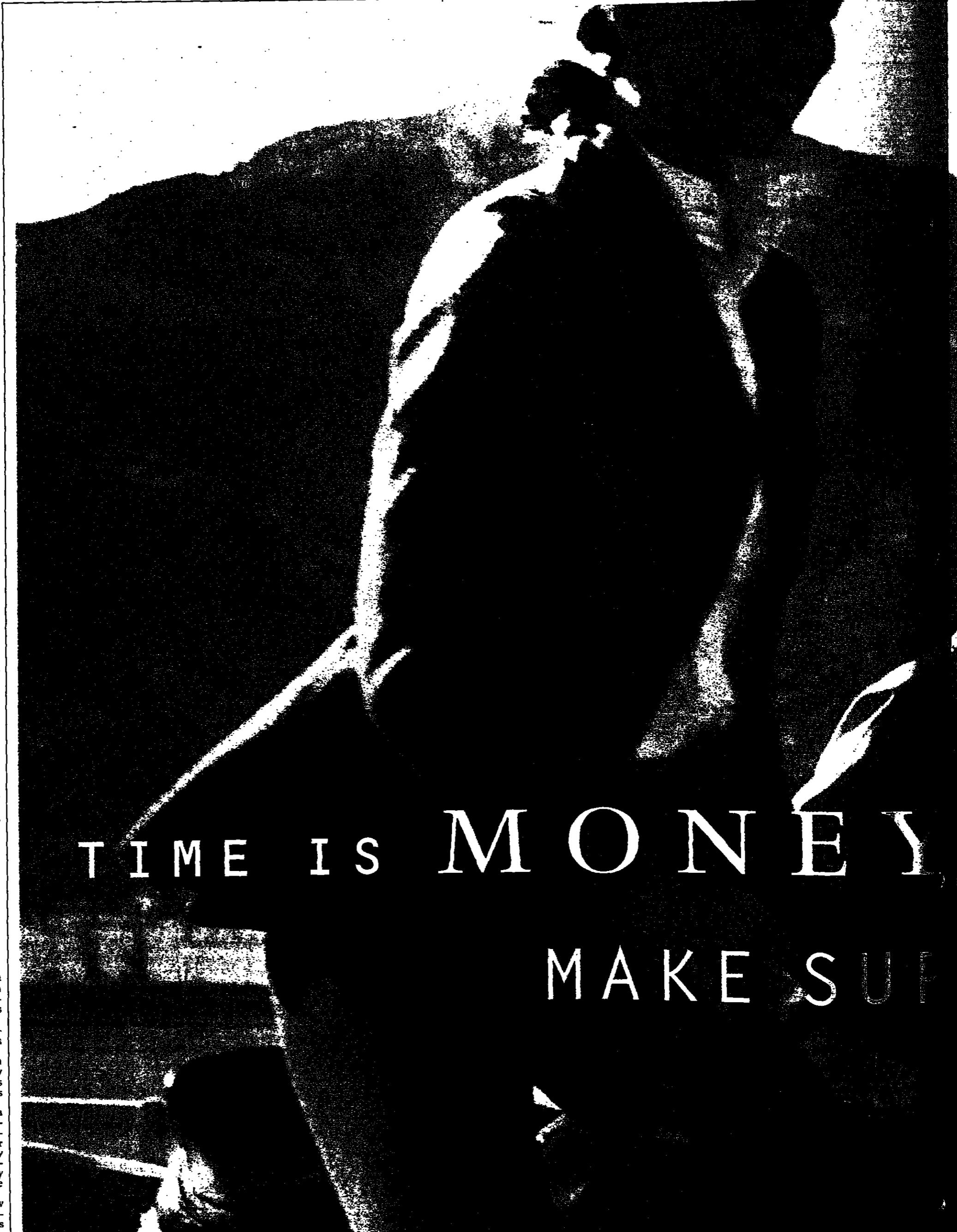
February for fatally shooting a colleague who taunted him about a three-year homosexual relationship he said was forced on him by Banana.

The High Court in Harare accepted evidence that Dube was sexually harassed by Banana.

Homosexuality is illegal in Zimbabwe. Police said they would bring criminal charges against Banana if investigators gathered enough evidence.

Dube's lawyers have filed a civil suit against Banana seeking 1.3 million Zimbabwe dollars (£70,000) in damages for stress-related illness caused by homosexual harassment. Banana is a professor of theology at the University of Zimbabwe in Harare.

Police want to interview university authorities who allegedly ignored complaints from male students, the *Financial Gazette* reports. It said football players from Banana's now-disbanded State House Tornadoes team had come forward with testimony that was being scrutinised.



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Great

Helmsman?

Hong Qiao market, in central Peking, most Westerners buying Mao memorabilia do so because it seems quaint or simply rather ridiculous.

A reproduction Mao snuff bottle can be put to various uses, a reproduction figurine of a revolutionary peasant looks good on the mantelpiece, and a giant Cultural Revolution cloth hanging portrait of the Great Helmsman makes a very unusual bedspread.

The question of the death toll of Mao's rule does not seem to arise. Few tourists have studied post-1949 Chinese history, and China itself still officially reveres Mao, so the issue of possible bad taste is easily sidestepped.

Those who are steeped in Chinese contemporary history are fully aware of what they are buying. Professor David Shambaugh, a Sinologist at George Washington University, admits to a collection of "more than 300" Mao pieces including badges, statues, posters, copies of the Little Red Book in several languages, and a Mao clock.

"It is indeed ironic when

vestiges of totalitarian tyrants, after their demise, assume collector's value and status as memorabilia," he said. "Such is the case with kitsch from the Mao era, and particularly the late Chairman's brainchild of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution – a mass movement that set back China's economy and society incalculably, and cost the lives and careers of hundreds of thousands of Chinese."

Peking's Chinese traders find it all rather improbable. Duan Xinhua, who at 42 years old is part of the generation whose education was wiped out by the Cultural Revolution, is selling off her own family's huge supply of Little Red Books in her Hong Qiao store. She also has a collection of Mao busts, in sizes to suit anyone's needs. "In fact, we don't know what the foreigners are thinking about when they buy these things," she said.

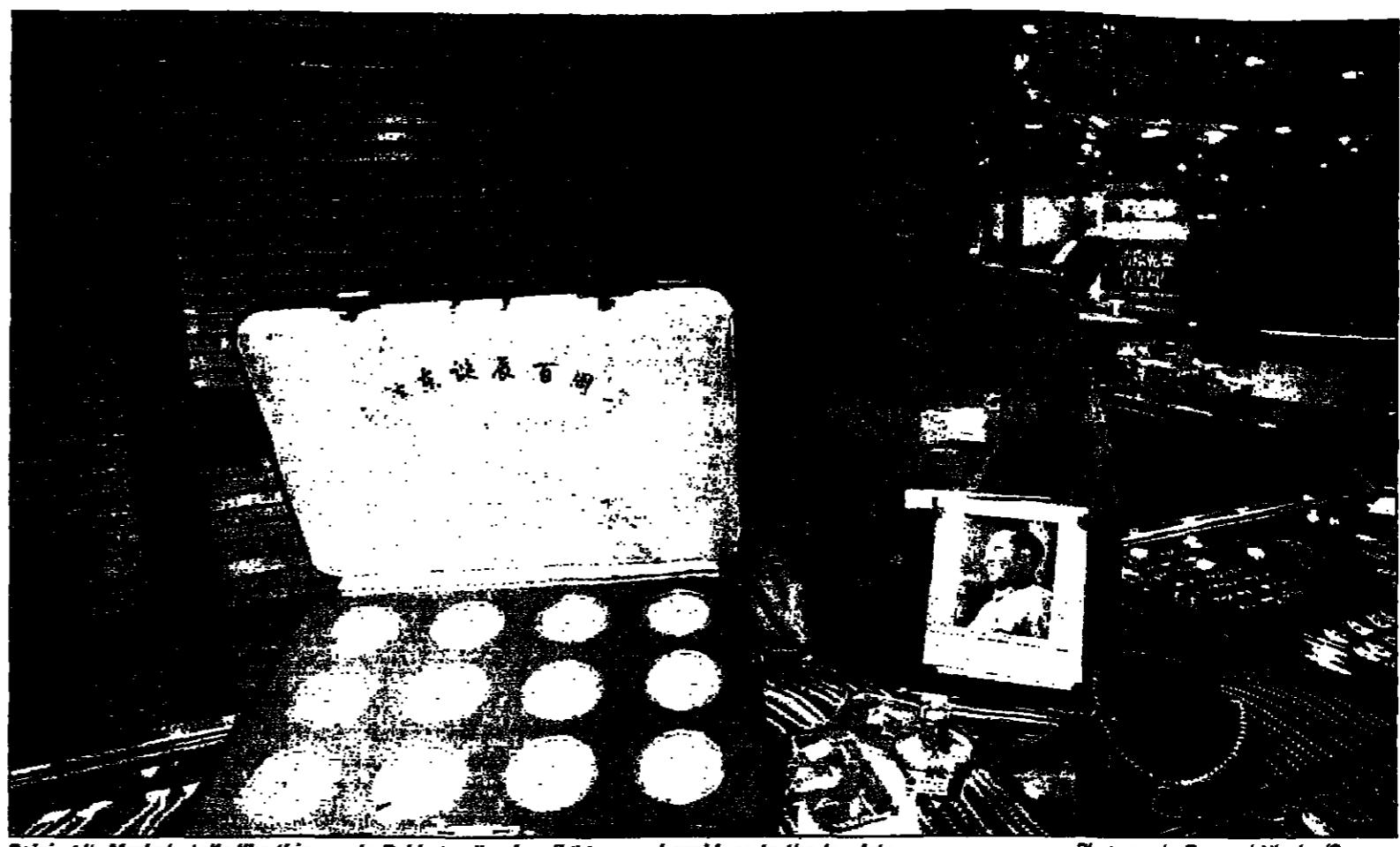
At his stall, Chen Guowei is offering a Cultural Revolution cloth portrait of Mao, made by the Hangzhou "The East is Red" Silk Factory. Does this amount to mercenary respect for the Chairman? "Only people who really like these will buy them. Even the government produces watches with Mao's face. That does not mean we do not respect him. That just shows we really respect him," he said.

For an unwitting foreign tourist, none of this comes cheap. Ms Duan wanted to sell me a 1977 five-volume set of Mao's extended Little Red Book. When published they would have set one back 3,9 yuan (50p); her rather optimistic opening offer to me was 500 yuan (£38).

Yao Zhongyong was one of millions of young Chinese "sent down to the countryside" during the Cultural Revolution, and did not manage to return to Peking for 20 years. Last year he put me off the whole Cultural Revolution shopping experience. "Chinese people still feel very deeply about that period. And they feel uncomfortable to know that foreigners, as spectators, like the art and artefacts of the Cultural Revolution. Everybody should know that it was a tragedy," he said.

Coining it: Market stalls like this one in Peking sell coins, lighters and cushions to the tourists

Photograph: Reynard Nicolas/Gamma



'Megan's law' murder puts public on trial

Mary Dejevsky
Washington

An emotionally charged murder case that went to trial this week in Trenton, New Jersey, has commanded American national attention over and above that accorded even to a particularly poignant child murder. It had made history – and law – well before the trial opened, and what is at stake is not just the life of the alleged killer, but the fate of a highly popular, but increasingly controversial, piece of legislation.

The defendant is Jesse Timmendequas, 36, who is additionally charged with kidnapping and sexual assault. The seven-year-old victim is known across the US only as "Megan", and the law that her killing inspired requires courts to inform local people when a convicted sex offender is released or paroled into their community.

On 29 July 1994, Megan Kanka is said to have knocked on the front door of Timmendequas, a recently-arrived neighbour, and asked to see the puppy he had just acquired. He invited her in. In the words of the prosecution lawyer, "Unsuspecting, trusting, seven-year-old Megan walked into the defendant's house ... She would never walk out."

Her mother said that at first she had been unconcerned about her daughter's disappearance because "this is such a nice neighbourhood". But her illusions had been shattered when police showed her pieces of her daughter's clothing that had been found in the dustbin of the house opposite – where Timmendequas lived.

He is said to have led police to a nearby park where they found Megan's body. Several statements and a signed confession eventually followed. If convicted, he could face the death penalty.

The subsequent revelation that Timmendequas already had two convictions for sex offences provoked fury in the quiet suburban district of Hamilton Township, and Megan's mother led a campaign to require the authorities to notify neighbours when a convicted sex offender moves in. The campaign developed into a national crusade, and 41 states followed New Jersey's lead in passing "Megan's laws".

The exact provisions of the laws vary, but all permit – or require – neighbours to be told when anyone who has a conviction for a sex offence settles nearby. They augment a requirement for sex offenders in all states to be registered with the police.

This week's trial has revived all the passion and outrage that was unleashed by Megan's murder. But there is also a sense in which it has come only just in time for the law's supporters. In eight states, including New Jersey, the "Megan's laws" are currently on hold; they are on the statute book but not being enforced because legal challenges are pending. Released sex offenders must register with the police, but there is no obligation to make their place of residence public.

The legal challenges reflect

the gathering strength of a reverse campaign that was launched when the sweeping effects of the new law started to become apparent. Those joining the backlash included not only civil liberties activists and people concerned with privacy, but also some of the very state legislators who had helped pass the original "Megan's laws".

They say they underestimated the strength of popular anger and revulsion where sex offenders are concerned. They had not expected, they said, that requiring released sex offenders to register their addresses and supplying the information to neighbours would mean – with rare exceptions – that the individual concerned would become an outcast, unable to settle anywhere for long, unable to start a new life even though he had served his sentence.

Some say the legislators' miscalculation only illustrated how far officialdom was out of touch with popular opinion. One well-documented case is that of a former offender who settled in Orange County, California. Neighbours were alerted to his presence by police leaflets giving his picture and warning: "a serious sex offender has been released into the community". People were advised to protect

themselves and their children. Not only did they do that, but also they photocopied the leaflets, posted them on lamp-posts, and organised protests.

The former offender was hounded from his first new neighbourhood by public demonstrations, placards and graffiti. He received death threats and lost his job. He found a new flat, but the manager terminated his lease when his identity was reported.

In one district of Georgia, names were publicised in public libraries – and then broadcast on local radio. New Mexico is proposing to post the names and social security numbers of offenders on the Internet.

Some of those now trying to change the law argue that sex offenders will simply choose to flout the law on registration if they are made outcasts. Others say that more general warnings could be issued in the neighbourhood, without pictures or addresses.

Some of the "Megan's laws" anyway require notification only in the case of "high-risk" offenders.

In time, the rights of children to protection and the constitutional rights of individuals to privacy are likely to be weighed against each other in court. Until then, the balance will remain uncertain, but the odds that Jesse Timmendequas will ever benefit from a revised law look slim.

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obituaries / gazette

Prince Napoleon

On every 5 May, the anniversary of Napoleon's death on St Helena in 1821, it is customary for the Bonaparte family, their friends and supporters, to lay a wreath on Napoleon's tomb in the Invalides. His memory is celebrated in a mass. But on 5 May last they were mourning for the head of their family, Louis Bonaparte, Prince Napoleon. His Imperial Highness, as he was called, had died in Switzerland two days previously.

Louis Bonaparte was the great-grandson of Prince Jerome, King of Westphalia from 1807 to 1813, the youngest brother of the Emperor, who lived long enough to become Governor of the Invalides during the Second Empire. He first married an American who

took the name of Elizabeth Patterson Bonaparte, but this marriage was dissolved on the Emperor's orders. He then married Catherine of Württemberg. His grandson, Victor Napoleon, when approaching the age of 50, married Princess Clémentine, the youngest daughter of Leopold II of Belgium. Their son, Louis, was born in Brussels in 1914.

The Third Republic had protected itself against royalists and Bonapartists by passing a law in 1886 which banned members of any family that had ruled over France from residing in the country. Hence the Prince spent his life in Belgium and Switzerland, and as a small boy passing some time with the aged Empress Eugénie in England.

He was educated at Louvain and Lausanne. When war broke out in 1939, he was living in Switzerland and he wrote to Edouard Daladier, then French Prime Minister, volunteering to serve in the French army. His offer was turned down, but he was determined to fight and adopted the name of Louis Blanchard, he joined the French Foreign Legion. He served in North Africa but, after the armistice, he was demobilised in 1941.

He returned to Switzerland but very quickly made contact with the French resistance. He worked with them in France and with their help he tried to cross the Pyrenees in December 1942. His aim was to proceed to Spain and from there to join de Gaulle in London, but he was arrested by the Germans. He spent some time in different prisons, including Fresnes. Eventually the Germans released him, and although he was under surveillance and confined to a limited area he succeeded in joining the Organisation de Résistance de l'Armée.

The ORA, as it was called, was a part of the resistance which had been built from those regular soldiers who had refused to accept the defeat of 1940 as definitive. The Prince, calling himself Louis (and sometimes Lucien) Monnier was given the rank of sergeant and served in the department of L'Indre. He was part of a brigade, known as the Charles Martel Brigade, which distinguished itself. They

were under frequent attack from the Germans and they had some difficulty in preserving their secret identity. On one occasion they were loudly greeted in a cafe by an enthusiastic young boy as "Armée clandestine".

After the Allies landed in Normandy, this unit was busily engaged in preventing the Germans from moving reinforcements northwards and westwards. It has been estimated that they killed or wounded some 2,500 German troops. But their own casualties were heavy. Another member of the Bonaparte family serving with them, Lieutenant Joachim Murat de Pontecorvo, was killed on 20 July 1944. And Prince Napoleon was badly wounded on 28 August, the

only one of a seven-man patrol to escape alive. Subsequently he was transferred to the Alpine Division with the rank of Lieutenant, using the more aristocratic pseudonym of Louis de Montfort. He was decorated for his bravery.

After 1945, he continued to live in Switzerland but he also lived in Paris (in the rue de Presbourg), both he and the authorities choosing to ignore that this was illegal until 1950, when the 1886 law was repealed. He spent his time pursuing his business interests in French and Belgian Africa, both before and after independence. He was prominent in motor-racing, being President of the Association Sportive de l'Automobile de France, and in winter sports.

His main concern was to preserve the Bonapartist heritage. In this he was a proud and exacting man, as anyone attending the ceremony for the Prince Imperial, who died fighting with the British army in the Zulu war in 1879, could witness. Before 1959, with the historian Louis Hamoteaux, he had published a volume of correspondence received by Napoleon. He was a powerful figure in the various Napoleonic associations.

The project of having the remains of Napoleon III, the Empress Eugénie, and the Prince Imperial, brought back to France from the abbey in Farnborough, was one that was very dear to him. But where should they go? What role in the

Douglas Johnson

Louis Marie Victor-Emmanuel Leopold Bonaparte, wartime resister and businessman: born Brussels 23 January 1914; succeeded 1926 as Prince Napoleon; married 1949 Alix de Foréza (two sons, two daughters); died Prangens, Switzerland 3 May 1997.

Sir Michael Shersby

When Michael Shersby first won Uxbridge for the Conservative Party in a by-election in 1972 (after the death of the redoubtable journalist MP Charles Curran) it was thought to be surprising: for the seat was marginal. Over the years, however – such was his skill as a constituency member, such his charm and assiduity, that without any significant help from the Boundary Commissioners, he had by 1989 converted a Labour marginal into a Conservative seat where he had a majority of 15,970. In the 1992 general election Shersby had a majority of more than 13,000. Last week however, in the great Labour landslide of 1 May, Uxbridge became marginal again, albeit Tory marginal: Shersby's majority was only 724.

Over the years, therefore, Shersby's achievement, viewed in constituency terms, was Herculean. Nevertheless he found time effectively to pursue a multitude of other interests. He enjoyed ministerial office only briefly. He was on the so-called payroll vote as unpaid Parliamentary Private Secretary to Michael Heseltine in January 1974; and that was all.

His friends thought in 1975 that he would receive some

preferment from Margaret Thatcher; but he had declined to support her leadership bid against Edward Heath, and she saw no need to placate the münnows of politics when she felt obliged, for the moment at any rate, to placate the sharks – mainly those who had opposed her in the leadership election.

This did not at all bother Shersby. He was one of those politicians who enjoyed campaigning on specific issues, and supporting specific causes. He was born in 1933 in Middlesex, and educated at the John Lyon School in Harrow; the thought of going to university never entered either his head, nor the head of his father. He earned a living in the sugar trade with Tate and Lyle; and the sugar industry was a besetting concern of his to the end of his life.

He caught the political bug in early manhood. He was elected to Paddington Borough Council in 1959, and to Westminster City Council in 1964; he served as Deputy Mayor of Westminster from 1967 to 1968. Thus, as with many other Conservative MPs of his modest middle-class background, his roots were in local government.

Once in the House of Commons, Shersby spread his wings,

He was on the right wing of his party; but his courtly and kinder manner ensured that he never attracted the bitter hostility which many of those who thought like him did. Even when he proposed the most stringent of immigration controls – except for "kids and kin" – there was no such uproar which, say, Enoch Powell attracted.

He was a superb committee man and sat on many back-bench committees, and was on the Speaker's panel. He became involved in the affairs of the Falkland Islands, and was a doughty champion of the cause of the islanders, becoming chairman of the all-party British-Falklands group in 1982, which post he held until his death.

Moreover, he had a passionate interest in the countryside, and formed a close alliance – which developed into a deep friendship – with that most devoted of Tory conservatives Sir Patrick Cormack. He successfully put through Parliament a remarkable muster of Private Members' Bills on such diverse subjects as gaming (to increase prize money available at bingo), park regulations and copyright. There were many other committees which he

served with devotion, but one that might be mentioned is his service on the all-party Esperanto group, between 1976 and 1977.

Michael Shersby was a man of insatiable curiosity, extravagant energy, and boundless dedication. He will be mourned across the political spectrum.

Patrick Cosgrave

Julian Michael Shersby: politician; born Ickenham, Middlesex 17 February 1933; Secretary, Association of Specialised Film Producers 1958-62; member, Paddington Borough Council 1959-64; Westminster City Council 1964-71; director, Sugar Bureau (British Sugar Bureau) 1966-67; director-general 1977-80; parliamentary adviser 1988-95; Deputy Lord Mayor of Westminster 1967-68; MP (Conservative) for Uxbridge 1972-97; PPS to Minister of Aerospace and Shipping DTT 1974; Treasurer, World Sugar Research Organisation 1982-97; member, Speaker's Panel of Chairmen, House of Commons 1983-97; Public Accounts Committee 1983-97; parliamentary adviser, Police Federation 1986-97; Kt 1995; married 1958 Barbara Barrow (one son, one daughter); died London 8 May 1997.



Shersby campaigning with his wife, Barbara, at the Uxbridge by-election in 1972. He retained the seat for the Conservatives last week

Finn Hoffding

Of the trio of grand old men of Danish music, only Hermann D. Koppel is left: Vagn Holmboe died last September and now Holmboe's teacher, Finn Hoffding, has gone too, 19 days after his 98th birthday. Hoffding's compositions seem – unjustifiably – to have fallen from current favour, although his selfless activity on behalf of music education will ensure that his contribution to music-making in Denmark lives on.

Hoffding was born in Copenhagen in 1899, took lessons on the violin and organ, and studied with the legendary scholar and contrapuntist Knud Jeppesen between 1918 and 1921 before travelling to Vienna to study with Joseph Marx – both men composer and musicologists, a double profile that left his mark on Hoffding's own career.

Hoffding was already composing: the first work in Svend Brøhus' and Dan Fog's 1969 catalogue of his work is a *Romance* for violin and strings from 1918.



Hoffding: humanist message
Photograph: Lebrecht Collection

develop his orchestral thoughts in a series of "Symphonic Fantasias", of which there are also four, composed between 1939 and 1953; No 2, *Der gäande väg* ("It Is Perfectly True", 1940, after Hans Christian Andersen), is perhaps his best-known work, and is the only one of his 18 orchestral pieces currently available on CD. There are also two "normal" operas: *Kaisers nye Klæder* ("The Emperor's Clothes", again after Andersen, 1926), *Kilderejsen* ("The Healing Spring", after Holberg, 1931), and a third, choral, one, *Pastuer* (1935), intended for performance in schools.

Hoffding's style owes something to the muscularity of Carl Nielsen, the greatest Danish of them all, but his lean counterpoint and thinner textures are tempered by an acquaintance with trends in contemporary neo-classicism and honed by a fine sense of irony. But, although his music

is generally traditional in expression, his ears were open: *Das Eisenbahnhochzeit* of 1924, for chorus, piano and three saxophones, flirts with jazz, and as late as 1965, in his *Fantasia Concertante*, he was experimenting with the sort of sounds to be found in mainstream European modernism – the list of percussion that work requires might as easily come from a score of Boulez.

As Hoffding's concert music emerged, so too did his educational works. An encounter with an amateur cantata of Hindemith's in Frankfurt in 1927 sparked the idea of a systematic approach to the teaching of music in Denmark, and brought about the first of a steady stream of works for amateurs, often for chorus, as well as easy pieces for young players. Hoffding's choral music, which often has a deeply humanist message, is now a staple of Danish school singing.

Hoffding was also a renowned teacher himself. He taught at the Royal Academy of Music in Copenhagen from 1931 until 1955, for the last years as its director. His pupils read like a roll-call of the great and good in Danish music, from Vagn Holmboe to Per Nørager, who takes Holmboe's place as the most noteworthy living Danish composer.

By the time of his death his advanced age had kept the frail Hoffding from the forefront of musical life in Denmark, and his music has slipped from sight. Thorough exploration of his large output (Bruun's and Fog's catalogue records 110 works up till 1969) would reveal a powerful, witty, thoughtful – and profoundly human – composer.

Martin Anderson

Finn Hoffding, composer: born Copenhagen 10 March 1899; married Asta Munck (died 1996); died Copenhagen 29 March 1997.

Murray Kempton

Murray Kempton, who is now dead but always seemed mythical, was a gentle and learned man who believed in his early employer H.L. Mencken that the purpose of a newspaper was to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable, writes Robert Koening [further to the obituary by Peter Pringle, 7 May].

I can't say how Murray behaved tête-à-tête with the great

and powerful, but he was unfailingly courteous and charming to the most junior employees of his newspaper. There was no one who did not adore him, though at times he made his bosses rather testy. Dorothy Schiff, the publisher of the *New York Post* (who, before Rupert Murdoch took it over, had pretty well run it into the ground) ordered Murray to

stop answering his mail after an irate reader sent him Murray's reply. It read, "Dear Mr _____, I have no respect for the views of a man who reads this newspaper, considering that, if he saved his money for a week, he could buy a paperback copy of *Proust*. Yours sincerely."

Murray Kempton was the quiet sort of Damon Runyon figure, one could imagine him, at the end of the bar, dispensing bitter truths with the reflective, rueful air of the Episcopal bishop he felt he should have been. When Murray went through one of his periodic depressions, Murdoch, who is brutal but not insensitive, quietly reassigned his top crime reporter to tan him, just in case. (Murdoch did not win any hearts for his solicitude, as people said it was working for him that made Murray want to kill himself.) In any case, Murray survived. He once riveted a dinner table that had been disturbed by a lengthly recital of his failures in suicide. "I've tried gas – that's no good. The pills didn't work. Then there was the time . . ."

He sounded quite cheerful about it, did Murray.

Murray Kohler

The charitable sector is a rich seam in British society, unmirrored by anything in the non-Anglo-Saxon world. Hugh Faulkner was central to the tradition.

In particular, he put on the map older people, asthma, and ME. His long involvement with Help the Aged (of which he was the founder, and director from 1961 to 1985) brought concern about older people to the fore.

Unconcerned with official favour, on the White Paper in 1980 he penned the rather perceptive comment: "Growing Older" is a complacent document . . . there is no hope for any immediate improvement for today's elderly. But he was not an armchair critic and his considerable energies went into running a very vigorous voluntary organisation which became under his direction one of the "top ten" fund-raising charities with an annual income of £10m. His belief was that older people should be part of society, not marginalised in special institutions, and the work of Help the Aged put great emphasis on housing, transport and environmental services.

Hugh Faulkner was born into a modest family in Leicestershire who could not afford to support his passion for music. He eventually qualified instead as a chartered secretary and went into administration and business, working from 1936-46 in the educational administration of the City of Leicester and then with Church Brothers estate agents.

His firmly held moral views, which as a pacifist caused him problems in 1940, were central to his life and he was always committed to his country and its values. The 1940s and 1950s saw him working increasingly with a group of Christian businessmen who took the view that a successful business should derive profits which could be applied to charitable purposes. Within this context, he became the Honorary Director of Voluntary and Christian Service in 1954, and from this base other charitable interests developed.

Not a man for retirement, at the age of 67 Faulkner became Director of the Asthma Research Council. He boosted its income five-fold, and built up the local network to over 150 branches. Asthma sufferers have enjoyed scant sympathy and tolerance in the past, but his work has contributed to a better public understanding, and a

flow of new research projects. Hugh Faulkner's wife, Anne, was associated with him in all his crusades, and it was through her suffering from Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) that both of them took on this cause, founding the Persistent Virus Disease Research Association in 1992 to support research into ME. Faulkner refused to accept the initial view that ME sufferers were somehow malingerers: ME is now recognised as a legitimate medical condition.

Faulkner's Christian commitment was a vital part of his life. Some of his colleagues might have felt that he was a workaholic – others that he was a relentless taskmaster. But he demanded nothing of others that he did not perform himself. If the centrepiece of his life was his work and identification with older people, his aspiration to secure "a more abundant life for older people" is one to which we can all subscribe. It is probably a more relevant vision today than when he formulated that view.

Mervyn Kohler

Hugh Branson Faulkner, charity administrator; born Lutterworth, Leicestershire 3 June 1916; Director, Help the Aged 1961-83; OBE 1980; Director, Asthma Research Council and Asthma Society 1983-88; Honorary Director, Persistent Virus Disease Research Foundation 1992-97; married 1954 Anne Carlton Miller (one son, one daughter); died 6 April 1997.

Hugh Faulkner was born into a modest family in Leicestershire who could not afford to support his passion for music. He eventually qualified instead as a chartered secretary and went into administration and business, working from 1936-46 in the educational administration of the City of Leicester and then with Church Brothers estate agents.

The judgment below showed confusion between the principles of family provision and those relating to mutual wills. His Lordship disagreed fundamentally. When the court found that the testator had been guilty in all the circumstances of a breach of moral obligation owed by a father to his child, leaving the child in straitened financial circumstances, the court must ensure that adequate provision was made for the child out of the estate, having regard to his need for maintenance and support: see *Bosch v Perpetual Trustee Co* [1938] AC 463.

The appraisal of all the circumstances was essentially for the trial judge. He had properly directed himself, and had not been shown to have erred in principle, or even to have reached a conclusion that was surprising or untoward. The sum awarded to the first plaintiff could not be challenged.

His Lordship reiterated the comments in *In re Gentry* [1980] 1 Ch 461 about the undesirability of dissipating estates of modest size by pursuing appeals against sensible judgments at first instance. The judgment in the present case was not only sensible: it was unimpeachable. The appeal and the cross-appeal would be dismissed.

Kate O'Hanlon, Barrister

Mutual wills are not binding without clear agreement

LAW REPORT

9 May 1997

similar form in favour of the first plaintiff. The first wife died in April 1991, and in August 1992 the testator married again, and made a new will in favour of his second wife, the defendant. He died a few months later.

J.H.G. Sunnucks (Poole & Co, Yeovil) for the defendant; Jeremy Gordon (Partner Dodson, Yeovil) for the plaintiffs.

The Court of Appeal dismissed the defendant's appeal against the award of £185,000 to the first plaintiff in the present case, which would prevent the survivor from interfering with the succession. That was a conclusion to which he was entitled to come on the evidence. The plaintiffs' appeal would, accordingly, be dismissed.

On the cross-appeal it had been argued that no provision should have been made for the first plaintiff under the 1975 Act. It had been further argued that

the judgment below showed confusion between the principles of family provision and those relating to mutual wills. His Lordship disagreed fundamentally. When the court found that the testator had been guilty in all the circumstances of a breach of moral obligation owed by a father to his child, leaving the child in straitened financial circumstances, the court must ensure that adequate provision was made for the child out of the estate, having regard to his need for maintenance and support: see <

A lot of promise, Mr Blair, but how to deliver?

After the number one priority, the top three priorities, the five pledges, the seven pillars of the decent society, the 10-point contract with the people and the 21 steps to the 21st century, the Chinese-style rhetoric of Labour's election campaign has finally met the reality of law-making.

"Enough of talking – it is time now to do," Tony Blair said as he entered Downing Street. And yesterday the hard decisions about the Bills to be put through parliament in the next year and a half had to be taken. The first casualty, as we reported yesterday, was the Freedom of Information Bill, its postponement announced by the Controller of Information himself, Peter Mandelson, before the Cabinet met to confirm it. *The Independent* passionately supports this simple measure, and believes the argument for further consultation is specious. Still, there is little purpose served by protesting, since it is also true that other measures are indeed more pressing.

On the whole, the list of more than 20 Bills for next week's Queen's Speech represents a substantial welcome and deliverable change of direction for the country. The Prime Minister and his Cabinet begin their administration surprisingly well prepared, in the light of the widespread perception that they were so focused on winning the election that they simply intended to bust it in the first 100 days. However, one statute the new government will not be able to repeal is the

Law of Unintended Consequences. As new ministers start to translate election pledges into the law of the land, they will find that nothing is ever as simple as it seemed on the hustings.

Take education, the "passion" and top three priorities of Mr Blair's government. Phasing out the assisted places scheme is straightforward and right, but the savings to the public purse are relatively minor, while the mechanics of limiting infants' class sizes are complex. How will the extra funding for smaller classes be distributed to largely self-governing schools? How will the limit of 30 pupils per class at ages five, six and seven be enforced? What if it drains resources from parts of the education budget where need is even more desperate? If civil servants ask these questions they will not be trying to obstruct the Labour government, but drawing attention to possible unplanned effects of manifesto promises.

It is the same with the National Health Service, subject of another Bill. Getting rid of some of the unnecessary paperwork of the internal market is unlikely to be easy, or to produce savings of £100m a year. Meanwhile, the eye-catching promises on waiting lists for cancer treatment, including abolishing waits altogether for breast cancer, may again have the unintended consequence of diverting resources from areas of even greater need.

It is the same again with the plan to



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take a quarter-of-a-million people off the dole and into, well, not work as such, but schemes. Green schemes. Volunteer schemes. Training schemes. During the election campaign there was much cloudiness about the shortage of young unemployed to go on these schemes, and about how far the long-term unemployed and lone mothers would be part of them.

The welfare-to-work programme is perhaps the key to the new programme, because its grander ambitions have been expressed in terms of tackling the £100bn-a-year "welfare budget", which absorbs one-third of all public spending. This is the golden goose that will provide

the resources for a long-term increase in spending on education.

But how? It is a large question, and so far Mr Blair's answer to it appears to be: Frank Field. Now, Mr Field is a man to be held in high respect and admiration; but he, too, suffers not a little from the politician's conventional dislocation between rhetoric and reality. Despite his reputation as a freethinker and radical moralist, he is also a soundbite man. They are good soundbites about the need to end dependency, about the incentive to fraud in the benefit system, about reform of pensions. But, last October, he unveiled a blueprint for a

pensions revolution which failed to live up to the advance billing. In effect, he proposed that those on more than average earnings of £18,000 a year should pay more in compulsory contributions to a state-guaranteed pension fund. He and Harriet Harman, Secretary of State for Social Security, will have to come up with a great deal better than this, and that will be more difficult in government than out.

Without some kind of breakthrough in this area, Labour's programme runs the risk of being more prosaic and modest than Mr Blair would really like. Again, we should not protest too much. Many of the measures in the Queen's Speech will make an important and immediate difference to people's lives – unintended consequences or no. The national minimum wage. Halving the five-month wait for sentencing persistent young offenders. The right to trade union recognition. A parliament for Scotland, assembly for Wales, open funding for political parties, an end to hereditary peers and the beginning of an independent Bank of England.

But the size of last week's landslide cannot help but raise expectations. There is a buzz in the air, a feeling that the country did not expect the outcome, but nevertheless feels pleased with what it has done. That is partly because Mr Blair has wisely avoided any tint of triumphalism, and talked of service and humility instead. But, alongside his cautious injunction not to "promise what we

cannot deliver", he has also pledged to deliver "the most radical overhaul of our education system since World War Two". Which is it to be? The rhetoric of restraint, but radicalism in action? We must hope so. We must hope that Mr Blair maintains a quietly confident demeanour that does not promise too much, and delivers somewhat more. If he succeeds, he has every prospect of carrying the country with him through the inevitable mistakes and reverses of the next year or two.

Cherie's on the case

Court reporting is not what it used to be. A packed press bench seemed to have some difficulty yesterday following the details of an Appeal Court case. St Helens borough council wants to strike out an industrial tribunal ruling that the terms of employment at a special school had been changed unlawfully when it was taken over from the county council. "The consequences of the decision are nothing short of horrendous," said counsel for St Helens. But did the assembled hacks report her argument? They did not. They were more interested in describing what she was wearing and what she ate for lunch. Congratulations to Cherie Booth QC, for getting on with her job.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Where is the freedom we voted for?

Sir: It is complete nonsense to suggest that a Freedom of Information Bill could not be ready in time for the first session of the new Parliament. If Gordon Brown believes that legislation could be ready to change the status of the Bank of England, an event that, unlike the Freedom of Information Act, has not, as far as the public is aware, been many years in the preparation, then so could this legislation.

Many of us, in the absence of proposed policies and measures, would like to feel that the new government is intending to be true to the spirit of its pre-election utterances. These include those of Tony Blair, quoted by Maurice Frankel in his admirable letter (8 May). We need a change of culture, and we need some real democracy.

What have we seen in the first week of the new government? Quite the opposite. The clear message that the Parliamentary party will be controlled from the centre, and that one of the most important moves towards democracy is to be deferred. Is this really what the electorate, in particular the hard-working members of local constituency parties, really voted for?

JULIET SOLOMON
London N10

Sir: Maurice Frankel (letter, 8 May) is quite right to draw attention to the need for a commitment in the Queen's Speech to legislation which clearly signals a change in the way politics is conducted in this country.

There is an alternative starting point to a Freedom of Information Act however. The Government could give a commitment to incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights. This international human rights treaty, written by British civil servants and ratified 40 years ago by the British government but never brought into British law, would protect many other rights in addition to the right to know. Article 10 of the Convention gives us "the right to receive and impart information and ideas without interference with public authority", and is backed by a substantial body of case law in favour of freedom of information. But the ECtHR also gives us the right to privacy, to a fair trial, freedom to practise one's religion, and the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

It is not a perfect document, and we would require at a later stage a specific Freedom of Information Act, along with a Bill of Rights. But it would provide us with basic protection of our rights, a starting point from which to develop future legislation – and a standard against which to measure laws passed by our new government. Commitment to incorporating the Convention would be a significant statement of intent by the new government.

ANDREW PUDDLEPHATT
Director, Charter 88
London EC1

Sir: Freedom of information and open government fall within the remit of Peter Mandelson. If New Labour does not go ahead with it, we will lose what faith and hope we have in them, which it is his job to maintain. Mr Mandelson has no portfolio of his own, just a remit to poke holes in other ministers. It would dignify him and the Government if his efforts were directed towards a greater good.



than Labour spin-doctrine: the honest and open presentation of government in power.

Why have they caved in so soon? Is maintaining the supremacy of the Stalinist tendency more important than reforming the way government serves the people?

SARA CLARKE
High Peak, Derbyshire

wielded by small parties. But the debate about the voting system for the Commons in the next century will continue.

RICHARD BURDEN MP
(Birmingham Northfield, Lab)
Chair, Labour Campaign for
Electoral Reform
Redditch, Bristol

Sir: Under PR everyone gets something they voted for, as opposed to one set of voters getting the lot and everyone else getting nothing. Policies would be based on compromise and co-operation. These are values we encourage in other areas of our lives – why should they not apply also to politics?

ANTHONY BITTAN
Beccles, East Sussex

Sir: John Diamond (letter, 7 May) says that 44.4 per cent of the voters have the government they voted for, but it would be interesting to know how many of these voters had read the Labour Party manifesto.

How many were in fact tactical voters who chose Labour as the best means of unseating a Conservative? Exactly how many people have got the kind of government they would really like?

Calculation of how many seats Labour and the rest would have obtained under PR ignores the fact that the parties as we know them would not have existed under PR. Both Labour and the Conservatives would have long ago split and we would by now have four or five largish parties and a few fringe ones.

We have to accept that very few voters will get exactly what they want

from any political party. It is more important to have a government whose policies can be supported, in general, by a majority of voters.

G F STEELE
Ipswich

Sir: One of the main reasons for introducing proportional representation is to bring some measure of honesty into our electoral process.

Parties have to trim their policies to appeal to swing voters in marginal constituencies. This is a narrow, unrepresentative sample of the population but no party is electable without its support. This is profoundly corrupting; both manifestos were trimmed to fit the party spin doctors' conception of what this small group of people wanted to hear.

PETER CERESOLE
London SW14

Sir: John Diamond (letter, 7 May) has been luckier than me. Having had both grandfathers displaying Gladstone's portrait in their cottage sitting-rooms, a father who always acted as Liberal agent in our North Dorset village, and reputed to have said to an early age, "Me no Tory", I have never voted for a successful candidate, though this time, in my ninetieth year, we came a very creditable second.

But the light still shines. Long live Paddy!

ARTHUR HARCOURT
Royston, Hertfordshire

American ways to fund universities

Sir: In your report (1 May) on the university President Clinton's daughter is assumed to be attending this autumn, Stanford is referred as the "most expensive in the US", suggesting that it is a rich kid's university.

This is untrue; the cost of a fully paid undergraduate education at Stanford is of the same order as at Harvard, Princeton, Yale or Caltech and merely reflects the true cost of a good degree. It is unfair, because Stanford is among the last few so-called need-blind universities once a large group.

It admits its undergraduates without regard to the ability of the student or the parents to pay. After acceptance, the Admissions Office prepares a full four-year budget including tuition, room, board, travel home, books etc. and matches it against the ability to pay. Any shortfall the university makes good through a variety of sources: loans, work study and direct grants from its rich kids.

Not surprisingly, the economic profile of its students and their parents is virtually identical with that of the University of California and other state universities.

TIEERD H VAN ANDEL
Cambridge
The writer is Loel Professor of Earth Sciences (emeritus), Stanford University

'Pingers' may not save porpoises

Sir: Your article "Noise to save porpoises' lives" (28 April) highlights the problem of barbour porpoise deaths in fishing nets that seems to be growing in the seas around Britain. The scale of the catches identified suggests that this is putting the survival of our porpoises at risk.

While research into potential solutions is to be welcomed, trials with noise-emitting "pingers" have produced very mixed results, and numerous uncertainties among scientists suggest that they are unlikely to provide the whole answer.

More importantly, this work does not address the needs of the porpoises now. Several international bodies have called for urgent action to address this issue and the last government made commitments to protect this vulnerable species, including in its own Biodiversity Action Plan. At the very least, emergency fisheries management measures should be introduced to reduce catches of porpoises where they are most at risk and to monitor the problem so that long-term solutions can be found.

ALI ROSS
Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society
Bath

Masonic defeat
Sir: One benefit for all of us, arising from the sudden influx of ladies into the Commons may have been overlooked: a dilution in the influence of that genteel mafia, the Freemasons.

PETER HILL
Warwickshire

Lawbreakers on the roads

Sir: With reference to Jonathan Youens's comments on cyclists breaking the law (Letters, 6 May), I have been cycling through the Medway Towns for 30 years. In that time the number of sets of traffic lights on a six-mile stretch has multiplied from two to 17 and one-way systems take us on longer, hillier routes than we used to use.

All these changes are for the convenience of the drivers of polluting monsters which directly kill about 3,000 people per year and who knows how many indirectly by their fumes. A new tunnel has just been opened under the River Medway to knock a couple of miles off some journeys. Pedestrians and cyclists are barred from this facility, which is for motor vehicles only.

Can Jonathan Youens really blame me if I sometimes lose patience and jump a red light or cut through the pedestrian precinct to avoid a long detour?

The Rev ROGER KNIGHT
Rochester, Kent

Sir: Jonathan Youens seems to believe that "infringing the law and the rules of common courtesy" is the sole preserve of cyclists.

In truth, a day does not go by when motorists of all ages do not consider the public footpath to be a car park. And perhaps routine exceeding of speed limits by motorists is the "greater disrespect for the law"; that Mr Youens refers to as the consequence of failing to educate our children properly?

LES TELFORD
Flatwick, Bedfordshire

Sir: I was pleased by the call for a ban on the use of mobile phones whilst driving a car (report, 1 May). However, one wonders who will enforce this ban, since our overstressed police cannot control many other car driving offences such as defective headlights and the current trend to ignore the law requiring the use of seat belts.

The majority of passengers in the rear do not "chunk-click". I am horrified to witness young children standing between the front seats ready to be catapulted through the windscreen in the event of a crash. A growing number of front passengers and young drivers ignore the law.

Can we not find an alternative law-enforcing agency to ensure that these laws are obeyed?

DAVID R DOMBEY
Sutton, Surrey

Too many jailed

Sir: Michael Phillips (Letters, 6 May) asks me to say how far prison overcrowding is due to more people committing imprisonable offences. Between 1992 and 1995 the number of people sentenced for indictable offences fell by 7 per cent, but the proportion given prison sentences rose from 15 to 20 per cent and in Crown Courts from 44 to 56 per cent. The sharply rising prison population does not therefore result from more offenders appearing before the courts but from harsher sentencing.

PAUL CAVADINO
Chair, Penal Affairs Consortium
London SW9

End of politics

Sir: Take the politics out of monetary policy? Great!

Now for education, health, law-enforcement...

FRANCIS ROADS
London E18

reportage

It's Cook's tour, says Robin

The new Foreign Secretary travelled to Paris and Bonn in unaccustomed style, but he quickly found the right notes to strike with his opposite numbers, writes Donald Macintyre, who accompanied him on his journey

It was Douglas Henderson, the new Minister of State for Europe, who summed it up. As the RAF BAe 146 touched down at Paris's Villacoublay military hall after an in-flight breakfast of bacon, omelette, hot rolls and – of course – Fortnum and Mason marmalade, the one-time engineering apprentice and trade union official from Fife surveyed the scene, starched napkins, silver cutlery and all, and declared: "Well, it beats flying Britannia to Tenerife."

You still feel that Henderson – a smart man who, in the 72 hours since he was appointed to join his boss Robin Cook at the Foreign Office on Sunday, has learnt more about the EU than most of us learn in a lifetime – thinks he will suddenly wake up and find it's all a dream. He knows this is a serious job – coveted before the election by Peter Mandelson, no less. But now, standing in the sumptuous tapestry-clad solemnity of the Quai D'Orsay (at the steps of which the French lay not just a red carpet, but a 14-strong sabre-brandishing guard of honour, splendid in gold braid and kepis, formed by the élite Garde Républicaine), he just can't stop himself breaking out in a grin or a wink.

It's partly, of course, that the trappings of power pass so swiftly and conspicuously from vanquished to victors in the British system. It's not just the hushed, respectful tones of the RAF personnel who carry the bags at Northolt, or the blue, armoured embassy Rolls Royce in which the new Foreign Secretary sweeps through Bonn (Henderson having to make do with a mere Jaguar) or the company of

some of the keenest brains in Whitehall, like Paul Lever, the FCO's deputy secretary for Europe, and Jeremy Greenstock, the political director. It's also that everyone wants to hear what you say and know what you think.

Nigel Scheinwald, the Foreign Office's head of news, strains to hear what Cook is saying to a handful of journalists above the roar of the 146's jet engines; after all, this will be the New Line, distributed to dozens of news-hungry British embassies to the world's press, to foreign governments. After less than a week the Line is still emerging. That's the peculiar thrill of a new government. Every remark the Secretary of State makes, every nuance, almost every raised eyebrow, helps the eager officials first to grasp what the Line will be, and then, with clinical efficiency, to ensure that it prevails. They are too professional to say so, but it's a Line they actually want to hear. Being nice to foreigners from time to time makes quite a change.

And this was very much – as the Foreign Secretary himself could not resist calling it – Cook's tour. Unlike Henderson, Cook has had almost three years to prepare for this moment. (Though even he momentarily forgot how much has changed: during a meeting with Hervé Le Charette, the French Foreign Minister, who chain-smoked his way through a working lunch with his new counterpart, of lobster, lamb, red fruits and ice cream, Cook referred to what "Labour", rather than The Government, would do.)

Like Gordon Brown, with his decision on autonomy for the Bank of England, Cook hit the ground running, saying that Britain would sign up to



Welcome to Kinkel's place: the Foreign Secretary will be looking for Cook's Diner to return the favour

Reuters

Social Chapter at next month's Intergovernmental conference in Amsterdam. The move reverberated instantly through Europe. And it set a wholly new tone, first for Cook's trip this week, and second for the talks about the IGC which Tony Blair will have in London today with Wim Kok, the Dutch prime minister and holder of the EU Presidency. There was also a modest stroke of good luck: Klaus Kinkel was not back from Egypt until Wednesday afternoon so Cook could go to Paris in the morning – making quite a lot of the fact when he got there that it was the first foreign country he had visited since the election – without offending Kinkel by going to Bonn second.

Just to make sure, when the talks began over asparagus, beef and wine with the German Foreign Minister at the coincidentally named Kinkel-Stuben restaurant, the Foreign Secretary promised to find a Cook's Restaurant for Kinkel to visit in London. This was not, perhaps, the greatest joke in the history of British diplomacy. But it seemed to break the ice. One German official sought out a senior British diplomat to say how impressed he had been not only by Cook's mastery of his brief but by his sense of humour. The talk produced one startling discovery. Kinkel appeared distinctly uncertain about the intricacies of the quota-hopping row over fishing. Was it possible that Tory ministers had not been quite as angry about the issue in private as they were in public? Cook made nothing of this, of course. Instead, in a TV interview he neatly turned the Tories' "puppet Blair" campaign poster

to the advantage of future Anglo-German relations. "It was," he said magisterially, "quite inappropriate to the head of another government."

Another good omen was the extraordinary impact the Labour victory has had on French, and to an extent, German politics. In France there was extensive coverage of last Thursday's election with the newspaper *Liberation* carrying 24 pages, edited in London. The event has become an issue in the French elections, with the right claiming that Blair won because he moved

the German SDP, who greeted Cook with an enormous bear hug, the Blair victory has not been an untimely blessing. The British party were shown a newspaper heading quoting Gerhard Schröder, Lafontaine's popular, formidable and modernising rival, saying that he was the Tony Blair of the German left. If Cook, as a possible left-wing challenger to Blair after John Smith's death, felt a sneaking twinge of sympathy, he certainly wasn't letting on.

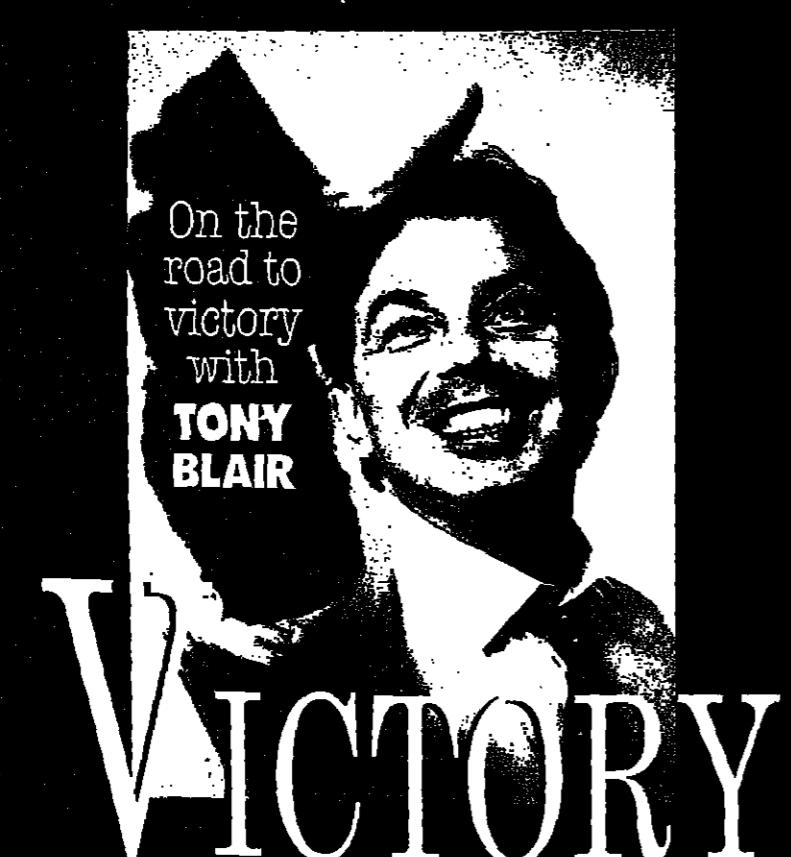
A clear New Labour strategy towards Europe is starting to emerge. Aside from his opposition to the single currency, Cook is a Euro-pragmatist rather than a Euro-sceptic. Any disappointment in Paris and Bonn about Britain's reluctance to join the single currency in the first wave was offset by Cook's clear promise not to obstruct its formation during our Presidency in the first half of 1998. It's true that the increasingly Europhobic tone adopted by both the main parties in the run-up to the election reflected, and perhaps contributed to, a mood of public suspicion about Europe. That mood was fuelled by *The Sun*, Labour's powerful new ally from the nationalistic right.

That mood, Cook appears to believe, could change quickly if Britain is seen to secure even quite modest successes in Europe without giving ground on issues like borders or foreign policy. Even *The Sun*, which has had to perform a somersault roughly equivalent to that of the communist *Daily Worker* in the wake of the Nazi-Soviet pact, was curiously muted last Monday about the decision to go ahead and sign the Social Chapter. Is it so unimaginable

Tory sceptics oppose the new powers he and Blair are ready to concede. So far from being an integrationist move, he says, it will help Strasbourg to impose a "democratic check" on the EU's other institutions. It's "totally weird" of the Tories to oppose ending the veto on anti-fraud measures when it simply means that a fraudulent country can avoid penalties. And so on.

It's almost impossible to underestimate the impact of this change in language. Particularly since there are growing signs – evident in Cook's talks with Kinkel this week – that the Germans are now anxious to get through the IGC with the minimum of fuss in order to clear the decks for EMU. To be sure of this change of public mood, the government needs to make headway on lifting the beef bar – which it has always held up as the most catastrophic failure of government policy. Cook shows every sign of knowing this; but he is guarded. It will, he says, need time. A sure sign of the new alignment is that the Italians have started complaining vociferously to London about all this talk of France, Germany and Britain as the "big three" of Europe. It seems increasingly likely that the public mood could start changing faster than looked possible before the election, as a result of a successful, and relatively non-integrationist, IGC. Britain remains hostile to grand integrationist designs. And so do Cook and Blair. But real leadership in Europe would be a novel and attractive prospect. It could even make some Tories wonder if they have really been fighting the wrong battles.

The Inside Story of Blair's Campaign



The book has been written by The Mirror's John Williams, who spent every minute of the election campaign on the road with Tony Blair and his entourage. The stunning pictures are by Tom Stoddart, the official photographer who was at Blair's side throughout the marathon campaign. Between them, Williams and Stoddart present a close-up picture of Tony Blair's Battle for Britain '97 that will fascinate everyone who reads it.

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Cheer up, it's National Eternal Verities Day

In this age of change, as we sweep towards the 21st century and a world of Internet and computers, and away from the simple verities of the 20th century like world wars and genocide, I find that many people feel they have nothing safe and sure left to hold on to.

Here, for instance, is a letter from a reader which says: "Dear Mr Kingston, I can sense that, beneath the trendy flash and modish references of your column, you are as much of an arch-conservative as I am. Could you comfort readers like me by providing us with a list of things that never change and which we can keep in mind, especially those of us who have been recently saddened or sidelined by progress?"

Willingly, Mr Portillo. Here is a short selection of the many things which never change in daily life, and which we can always cling to.

1. Large posters for films which tell you everything you need to know about the people involved ("Music orchestrated by William Frankster from an idea by

Carl J Krieger") but nothing about the film itself except one of those meaningless cliché slogans: "One of them had to die. Each thought it was the other. Both were wrong..."

2. Boxes of safety matches which lie around the house untouched until, when you finally come to use them, you find they are no good, either because somebody has filled them entirely with used matches, or because the striking surface has gone too damp to provide friction, or because the heads of the matches are so old they fall off on contact.

3. Tiny sticky labels on French apples saying "French apple".

4. Birthday cards which specify who they are for, as in "The Best of Birthdays to my dearest Great-Aunt".

5. Large, deep puddles which form in filling stations after five minutes of rain in such a place that you never notice them until you get out of your car and find yourself standing in one of them.

6. Orange, red and blue posters standing on sticks in the middle of fields urging "You are here" and tracing their route manually.

9. Huge posters which are so obscure that it takes a while to work out what the product being advertised is, and a lot longer to work out the connection.

10. Weather forecasts which are so versatile in their predictions that whatever happens seems to have been covered in the forecast, suggesting perhaps that meteorology and astrology are not so far apart as some of us might think.

11. VCR machines which, when you come to use them for timing a TV recording, are showing nothing but a flickering screen because there has been some recent electrical power cut, which means you now have to set the clock and date again, which means getting out the instructions for the machine, wherever they are...

12. The piece of card you normally put under the shortest leg of your kitchen table and which someone has thrown away because it didn't look as if it were needed.

13. Cellophane skins tightly wrapped round new tapes, cigarette packets, etc.

which look as if they will need a slight tug to remove but which are in fact designed to repel all but the fiercest onslaught with scissors, knife and gun.

14. Serial stories in the press which feature someone called "Little Lucille" or "Young Wesley" in such headlines as "Little Lucille Still in Danger" or "No Sign of Young Wesley" and which mean nothing at all to you if you happen to have missed the first episode.

15. Days which are designated National Days, as in National Smile Day, National Limerick Day or National Correct Signalling Day, though the only sign of this is someone on Radio 4's *Today* programme saying, "Well, today of course is National Smile Day, so cheer up, James," which is the last reference to it you get for the rest of the day.

16. Snooker, the annual world championship of which seems to come round every three months and to last two-and-a-half months.

A much fuller list of slightly irritating things which never change can be found in your daily paper.



Miles Kington

you to vote for people called Foster, Chester or Blister in an election which took place months ago.

7. People who automatically pronounce "picturesque" as "picture-skew" even though they long ago gave up expecting people to laugh at it.

8. "You are here" patches on town maps and tube maps, tourist maps and street maps, which are totally worn away and made illegible because many people cannot read public maps without putting their finger on the place marked "You are here" and tracing their route manually.

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الدبلوماسيون

the commentators

The well of cynicism runs dry



We had almost forgotten what politics is for... it is there to change things, says Andrew Marr

Before the election, Tony Blair dismissed talk of a "first hundred days" of frantic activity by which his administration could be judged. Natural caution, no doubt; but the first hundred-plus hours have been extraordinary enough. Whatever disappointments lie ahead, no one can now say that Labour has come into government without the ideas or energy needed for success.

Among the welter of interviews, promises, bills being prepared and appointments announced, there is already a theme emerging. It could be called the politics of executive power. A disciplined centralisation not seen in Whitehall outside wartime is briskly unveiled. New Labour MPs, with freshly crumpled Underground maps to hand, are ordered to abstain from strong drink, sexual congress and political talk of all kinds.

The key promises of the manifesto are quickly prioritised. Bills are ordered up with a sense of urgency we haven't seen for years. Knuckle-cracking civil servants, grinning with trepidation, are told what is what; and find their new masters more forceful and confident than they'd expected.

The Governor of the Bank of England is bundled early out of bed and frogmarched by a team of beetle-browed former journalists from the *Financial Times* to be handed Britain's interest rate policy by Gordon Brown. Across the Channel, meanwhile, Robin Cook is kissed, despite his bristles, by numerous smooth Frenchmen and then heartily palmed by Germans.

Press officers in departments across London are told to clear every announcement with Alastair Campbell. Journalists are warned that the days of basted quails and lemony Sancerre with young ministers are over. A V-formation of despatch riders roars down the Mall to inform the Queen that, from now on, permission to leave her private apartments will have to be obtained in writing from the office of Peter Mandelson.

Well, I exaggerate a little. But the self-confidence and purposefulness of the New Labour leadership is remarkable, surprising and admirable.

Of the changed ministerial briefs, most are encouraging. For example, Donald Dewar is the right man to carry forward Scottish devolution and Nick Brown will make a formidable Chief Whip, with just the right mix of geniality and brutality. Though Chris Smith will be disappointed not to be given Health, he is the right man for the Department of National Heritage - which he should quickly rename the Ministry of Culture - and has a very good team there. They can make more of a difference to the country's mood than perhaps they yet realise. Overall, my impression is of a Government which is less doughy and more inter-

esting than we could have hoped for. Things will not carry on as blithely as this. Events and political entropy will take their toll. It may be sensible, but I do not believe the control being attempted by Number 10 will be sustainable. It isn't compatible with Parliamentary politics. Government is too big, and there are too many big egos involved. More important are the big political and even philosophical issues still to be resolved by New Labour. As hard choices are made, the coalition of assent created by Blair in opposition will begin to fracture. It will not be possible to carry through radical pensions reform without extra resources. It will not be possible to make enough of a difference in the Health Service or education without diverting funds or finding new money. Yet any tax increases in the coming Budget, whether from council tax, VAT, allowances or inheritance tax, will anger parts of the Middle England New Labour has so assiduously wooed. Well, some enemies have to be made. Blair might reflect, perhaps, that he won his landslide more because the Tory voters stayed at home than because of an army of Home Counties converts; and that he will be forgiven some extra taxation - so long as it is not extreme - if he shows a clear sense of direction and political purpose. What is intolerable is squandered taxation.

On the other big choice confronting Labour, whether to be radical/reformist, or conservative/centralist, the early evidence is mixed. There are the already cited centralising tendencies inside Government. If those hardened into an obsessive "control freak" culture, then we could suddenly find Labour reengaging on its commitment to reviving local democracy - or democracy generally. The Government could perfectly well have introduced a Freedom of Information Bill straight away; I will be uneasy until it does.

Against all that we must set the vigour and appetite for reform that is in the Queen's Speech list - including Scottish and Welsh devolution and the planned referendum on London government, as well as the freer financial regime for town halls. On balance I think we should be heartened by the Blairites' early moves on reform. Above all, there is an impatient energy coursing through Westminster that hasn't been there since the heyday of Thatcherism. We had almost forgotten what politics is for - not for internalised party vendettas, or colloquies on the nature of sovereignty, or TV soap opera, or even to provide the raw material for show-off journalism. It is there to change things. And maybe it will: lowering my bucket over the past few days, I've discovered that my well of cynicism isn't quite as feudal and bottomless as I'd thought.



Welcome to 'Blair's Babes' but the struggle goes on

Labour has 101 women in Parliament thanks to feminist drive, but what will they do for their worse-off sisters, asks Suzanne Moore

This is an historic occasion indeed! Margaret Beckett has been elected a babe. There she is, down at the front of that terrific picture of Tony Blair surrounded by all the New Labour women on the steps of Church House. The *Daily Mail* chose to headline this image "Blair's Babes". Matthew Parris commented somewhat archly: "So many purple suits! So much hair spray!" It all reminded me of that picture of Hugh Hefner surrounded by his Playboy Bunnies, except of course that these women are not bunnies, they are, say it again, MPs.

The sudden visibility of women is enchanting, one is inclined to forget that only two weeks ago women were virtually invisible in the election campaign. Indeed, now that we are in the mood, we can forgive and forget a lot of things if we really try, just like Tony Blair forgot to tell Harriet Harman that she was in fact... er, Minister for Women. We can forget that Roy Hattersley called women-only shortlists "a silly idea", that Blair himself described the scheme as "not ideal at all". We can forget the battles that Clare Short had when she was Spokesperson for Women. We can forget the promise of a separate and properly funded Ministry for Women.

Now that new era has begun and New Labour flaunts its femininity, perhaps these things may be eminently forgettable. We just don't need to worry our pretty heads about positive discrimination anymore. Look how much better Labour is than the Tories with their unlucky 13 female MPs. Anyway, affirmative action, that offensive Americanised phrase, smacks

of political correctness, of old-fashioned feminism, of a bygone era of wimmin of Big Sister watching every move.

It is easy enough to say that things would have got better all by themselves. After all, this is the age of Girl Power, of a culture in which girls are outperforming boys at every level. In some classes and in some situations this is certainly true. The earnings gap between young male and female professionals is closing. Yet at both the top end and bottom end of society, the gender gap is as wide as it ever was. Only 3 per cent of company directors are female, and at the other end of the scale the impoverishment of single parents means thousands of women and children are living in appalling circumstances.

The idea of separate women's issues has become almost meaningless, but if anything is a women's issue, it is the minimum wage that looks like being set at a lower level than has previously been discussed. Had the Minister for Women's job not been taken on to Harriet Harman's already bulging portfolio, it is possible to imagine that some of the Labour Party's commitments to women might be delivered. Of course none of these commitments were in the Labour party pledges, so no actual promises will be broken. None the less, both those within and without the party have expectations about what a Labour government will actually do for us.

Despite the photo-opportunities, less than a quarter of the new

intake are women. So how many of these were propelled into power through the despised all-women shortlists? Less than a third. If we say that perhaps half of these women might have got through anyway, we are talking perhaps about 15 women who benefited from this quota system. Yet what these shortlists did was raise the profile of women in the party, provoking a debate that meant a sluggish and smug institution became more self-aware. Barbara Follett's powerful argument at the time was that without doing anything, nothing would change. As she reminded us, Labour returned the same number of women to Parliament in 1987 as it did in 1945. Blair, in one sense, was right to say that the shortlists were not ideal, but then the alternative was doing nothing and ending up like the Tory Party.

Positive discrimination in favour of women, as we have seen in other countries, often means that beneficiaries are defensive. It also means a male backlash with men cast as the new victims. Yet it is a means to an end; and at conference last year, Labour backed a motion calling for a target of 50 per cent female MPs in the next 10 years. It was proposed by Clare Short, who described it correctly as the "biggest modernisation of all". Even Tories were forced to comment on the number of bright young women at conference, Boris Johnson registering much Hot Totty on his own personal Tottymeter.

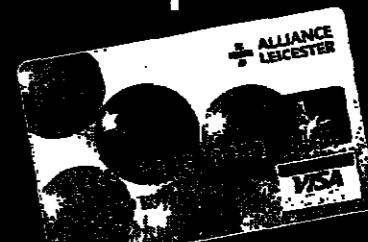
And now that the Totty is on display, giggling in the corridors of

equal representation. The irony, not so gentle, is that at a time when such feminist tactics are referred to as "so Seventies", as completely out of touch and out of date, they have produced such a dramatic change in the House of Commons.

For the Tories this is yet another problem that they must deal with if they want to reconstitute themselves as a serious party. At a grassroots level they need to persuade their female supporters to vote for women instead of more ghastly Tory Boys. For the Conservatives to impose any sort of quota system is almost inconceivable, but without one it is difficult to see how any sort of progress will be made.

However, while New Labour congratulates itself on its landslide and its new feminised culture, it should also remember its irritating little anthem "Things can only get better...". While we are looking forward, glance backward over New Labour's shoulder and you will see the struggle it has been to produce this profound shift in its own culture. Being a politician means never having to say you are sorry and I don't expect Blair to be any different; but he cannot be allowed to take all the credit here. At long last the party has delivered up some women. The question now is this: what can the Government deliver for all women?

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What little doctors need to learn



Jack O'Sullivan

Young boys interested in sex need

to be taught more than just names for parts of the body

their final year and a small minority of boys will also have entered puberty (the average age is 12, although the poverty of research about boys means we don't really know). A few are taller than some of their teachers, and their voices have dropped. "It is a safe assumption that one or two in a year group will be capable of ejaculation," according to Dr John Coleman of the Trust for the Study of Adolescence.

Primary school teachers will tell you of occasions when groups of primary-age boys have got girls in a corner and tried to touch them up. There are also cases where a girl, perhaps because she has been sexually abused, will tend to re-enact what happened to her and will encourage boys to touch her.

Sexual expression gets entangled with violence. Once boys reach nine or ten, they find themselves having constantly to prove themselves, demonstrate their masculinity, to impress their all-important peer group. "Boys may need to show that they don't need girls, particularly if they are not very successful with them," says David Warden, a child psychologist at Strathclyde University. "These unsuccessful boys are the most likely to get aggressive in an effort to gain at least the support of their male peers." Both boys and girls explore how, by using cruelty, they can gain power over people. Among girls, says Dr Warden, it's more likely to be verbal cruelty, undermining a boy's self-esteem, calling him a wimp. The boys are more likely to hit out.

Amid all this, there is great confusion.

A child will report that a boy and a girl are having sex, when all that happened was that they were chatting. Children will use words without understanding what they are saying. Adults will get the full meaning and be shocked, which is, perhaps exactly what the child wants.

Some of this is new. Children hear much more about sex than they did in the past. It's on every television channel. It is enough to be literate and to open a newspaper - at once you gain access to an adult world. All this makes playground language much more robust. But those who work with children say that, for all the information they gain through the media about sex, young people have the same old difficulties making sense of it all.

Boys face particular difficulties. Not only do they often grow up in a highly competitive, bullying context at school, a culture in which it is *de rigueur* to hold girls in disdain from the ages of seven or eight, so as to prove yourself a "real man". Boys also grow up in isolation from proper support in their sexual development. At primary school, children learn the parts of the body through the science curriculum. But this focus on reproductive techniques tends to engage girls more than boys, according to the Sex Education Forum, which has organised government-funded seminars on the deficiencies of provision for boys. The stuff about relationships, social skills and morality can easily be squeezed out by the demands of the national curriculum,

says Gill Lendbury, the forum's co-ordinator. Meanwhile, at home, mothers tend to talk more to their daughters than to their sons about sexuality, and fathers are reluctant to raise the issue at all.

Part of the problem is that boys are not seen as having an obvious stage of development equivalent to girls menstruating. But another factor is that sex education partly a response to fears. Parents are still less worried about what a son gets up to than about the possibility of a daughter becoming pregnant. Boys are less likely to learn about sex from informed sources such as health professionals because they are unlikely to attend a young person's clinic in the first place.

What all this adds up to in these supposedly enlightened times is a generation of boys who are largely cast adrift by the adult world as they try to make sense of their sexual identity. These are boys who will face considerable peer pressure to lose their virginity and who, unless offered other guidance, will learn much of what they know about sex from pornography.

Interesting solutions are being pioneered. Some primary schools now provide puberty sessions for boys. Others have invited fathers into school for sessions with their sons to discuss the boys' feelings about sexuality. This is a start. But there is a long way to go. If we fail to support boys properly, we should not be surprised that many take their sexual confusions into adulthood and that the early lives of a few are marked by sexual horror stories.

business & city

Business news desk: tel 0171-298 2636 fax 0171-298 2098
BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

BCCI fraudster jailed for record 14 years and fined £3m

Kim Sengupta

Abbas Kasimili Gokal, the world's biggest fraudster, yesterday received the longest jail sentence ever handed down by a British court for fraud. The biggest ever orders for compensation and legal costs in a fraud case were also made against him.

Gokal, the man in the centre of the collapse of the Bank of Credit & Commerce International, was jailed for 14 years at the Old Bailey. The defendant, who had fought his case on legal aid, was also told to pay £2.94m in compensation from his personal assets within two years or face a further three years in prison.

The judge also agreed to a prosecution request that the costs of £4.3m for the 125-day trial should be awarded against the disgraced Pakistani shipping magnate. However, the enforcement of this order was stayed until further assets held by Gokal could be traced. The Serious

Fraud Office believes that he has £100m secreted abroad.

Mr Justice Buxton said that he was satisfied that Gokal, subsidised by the British taxpayer during the case, had more than enough funds to bankroll his own defence. But he added they did not wish to pass any comments on the "appropriateness" of the defendant being given funds by the Legal Aid Board.

Gokal, 61, had been convicted of fraud involving \$1.2bn (£740m) in loans from the corrupt bank. He was a close friend of Hassan Abedi, the bank's founder, and had been the biggest single borrower before bank lending authorities shut down BCCI in 1992 following the discovery of fraud to the value of \$20bn.

As he was being led down to the cells the former tycoon, a tall, silver-haired slightly stooping figure in a navy chalk striped suit, white shirt, black and white patterned tie, smiled and waved at his wife Rukaiya, and daughter Sukainya, in the public

gallery. The court had been told that Gokal, who had claimed he was penniless, had been giving them and other members of the family "gifts" in an attempt to avoid paying financial penalties.

Mr Justice Buxton said he was taking the defendant's age into account, as well as the fact he had spent almost three years in custody since his arrest at Frankfurt in 1994 in deciding his sentence. But he was soothed in his condemnation of Gokal's criminal career, and the "lying and untrue defence" he had put forward.

The judge said: "I am wholly satisfied that you are an intelligent, sophisticated and unscrupulous man who put the interests of yourself and your family before all else."

"These were not victimless crimes. First the fraudulent conduct of a major international bank, BCCI, and the concealment from its auditors and regulators of its insecure financial position, all of which you



Abbas Gokal: Convicted of fraud involving £740m in bank loans

helped and facilitated, created a serious threat to the integrity of the whole international banking system."

"Secondly, one of the main objectives of the conspiracies was to conceal the true position of BCCI enabling it to continue to take funds from depositors. The victims of

were those who have lost a large part of their investments and in some cases a large part of their life savings. They trusted the bank with their money, as you knew they would. Other depositors were public bodies, including local authorities, who although not ruined by the collapse of BCCI have found their activities seriously restricted, and thus the interests of the inhabitants of their area seriously damaged by losing their deposit."

He added: "You have shown not the slightest apology or remorse for these massive frauds or for the damage and loss that your conspiracies have caused to many thousands of innocent people."

"I have not the slightest doubt that, with the cynical calculation that has characterised all your dealings, you put forward a lying and untrue defence, because you hoped that the complicated nature of the fraudulent agreement that you had made, and the skill with which you have sought to cover your tracks, would cause

such difficulty in proving the case against you in court that you would evade justice."

The judge added that in his view "an improper and dishonest relationship" existed between Gokal and the BCCI founder, Abedi, from the very beginning. As early as 1975 the pair were involved in illicit activities, and together created a miasma of false documentation and accounts.

Anthony Hacking QC, the prosecutor, told the court that Gokal had operated "behind a wall of mirrors", concealing a network of "money laundering, and sophisticated and devious fraud". He added that the defendant was "incapable of giving truthful evidence".

After sentencing, Chris Dickson, a senior SFO lawyer said: "This was one of the most complex investigations ever mounted by us. We had to send investigators to every continent to gather evidence because Gokal insisted on pleading not guilty."

"We also had to call witnesses from

80 different countries. We are convinced that a huge amount of money is still hidden abroad. This is no consolation to thousands of investors, many of them small businessmen who have lost everything."

The collapse of BCCI in 1991 led to financial disaster for depositors, including public bodies. The Western Isles Council lost £23m, Westminster City Council was owed £3.5m and Harlow Council in Essex £4.5m. One of the biggest single losers was the Sheikhs of Abu Dhabi who lost £23m.

Gokal, charged on two counts of conspiring to commit fraud, was sentenced to four years on the first count and 10 years on count two, the sentence to be served consecutively.

In 1994 liquidators for BCCI obtained a High Court order for \$830m against Gokal. Yesterday, Mr Justice Buxton, said: "It seems quite clear to me that Mr Gokal has not the slightest intention of complying with any court order."

BT to get early release from bar on broadcast TV

Cathy Newman

The Government is to start early talks with British Telecom aimed at allowing the telephone giant to move swiftly into entertainment broadcasting.

Any such dispensation would end the long-standing ban on BT broadcasting entertainment network, a restriction it has claimed has prevented it from investing billions of pounds in high-capacity fibre optic cables.

In an interview with *The Independent*, Chris Smith, the National Heritage Secretary, yesterday indicated Labour would fulfil the promise it made in opposition two years ago that BT would be allowed to compete with the cable television industry sooner than 2001 when the ban is due to be reviewed. In return he would expect BT to

fulfil its pledge to connect schools, hospitals and libraries to the so-called information superhighway free of charge.

He said his department and the Department of Trade and Industry would talk to BT about the proposals in "the near future". Mr Smith added: "We did set out a couple of years ago a set of proposals that enabled BT to have access to an entertainment market on a somewhat faster time scale than is envisaged in the current legislation.

Those proposals are still on the page, so to speak. We'd want to begin discussions in the relatively near future."

Under the agreement, Mr Smith said BT would be committed to developing a "broadband network as near to nationwide as we could achieve". He estimated that such a project could cost BT as

much as £10bn, though the company has previously said this would total £1.5bn. It currently invests some £2bn a year.

A BT spokesman said yesterday: "This reaffirms Labour's commitment to the findings of the Trade and Industry Select Committee which said the ban should be lifted earlier."

However, the news will upset the cable companies and could lead to conflict with the industry regulator, Ofcom. Both have argued that the ban was the only way to encourage rival operators to invest billions of pounds in developing networks. There are also question marks over BT's commitment to invest heavily in laying fibre optic cables to homes. Last year it experimented with a television service to 2,500 homes down its existing copper phone wires, but the digital technology needed to make it work is expensive.

Referring to the development of digital television, Mr Smith said the Government had a more "pro-active" role to play. While he would not be drawn on specific policies, he commented:

"We do need to put some thought into how digital television is being promoted by the Government and what sort of access people are going to have to it."

He said he would be formulating proposals within the next few months, and added: "My aim will be to find the best possible ways of ensuring that ordinary people sitting at home can have the quickest and cheapest access to digital television technology. We have to set the parameters of public policy in a way that enables that access to be achieved."

He also said that he had no immediate intention of relaxing cross-media ownership legislation, contrary to some expectations.



Unlikely alliance: Noel Edmonds (left) and the biotechnology entrepreneur Chris Evans

CWC set to cut 500 jobs in initial overhaul

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

Cable & Wireless Communications, the recently formed cable TV and telephony giant, is about to cut hundreds of managerial jobs as it merges the administrative operations of the four companies which joined to form the new venture.

The company has advertised 80 senior jobs in a first layer of management below the executive board and confirmed yesterday that it had received 300 internal applications, though some had come from staff on lower grades. Once the round of appointments is completed a further three larger management layers will be advertised inside the group. The aim is for each layer of management to organise the selection process for the next layer.

One source said the process was likely to result in a total of 500 job cuts because there were far more applicants than jobs available. CWC was created out of the landmark merger announced last year of Cable & Wireless's Mercury subsidiary with three cable operators, Nynex CableComms, Bell Cablemedia and Videotron. CWC shares began trading last month.

The job cuts, which will take place later this year, will almost certainly result in generous redundancy payments. The four companies have offered staff so-called "loyalty bonuses" if they stay in their posts until the process is completed.

Graham Wallace, chief executive, said the selection process had been "totally fair and above board". He added: "This layer of staff will be in place by the end of May and from 1 June we will move on to the next layer. The bulk of the staff are incredibly motivated to make this work. We're doing it in a rigorous and fair way and we've been very open about it."

Mr Wallace also cast doubt on claims that the total job cuts across the group would rise to 2,000 once call centres and network control buildings were merged or closed. The process is expected to take much longer than the initial administrative job cuts.

He said overall staff numbers for the group may not fall much below their current level of 12,500. "This could be a non-issue. We are looking at expanding sales and marketing functions so you can't conclude that overall numbers will fall. The expansion could more than offset the reductions."

The race to launch the first digital interactive television service slowed yesterday when the UK's two largest cable operators revealed they may delay the start of their planned joint service by up to six months, writes *Chris Godsmark*.

The move follows this week's news that British Interactive Broadcasting (BIB), the digital satellite venture involving British Telecom and BSkyB, will not reach consumers until spring next year. Graham Wallace, chief executive of Cable & Wireless Communications and Stephen Davidson, chief executive of Telewest, have discussed postponing their digital cable service from the planned start date of October or November to coincide with Sky's launch.

Mr Wallace said yesterday: "Given that the external

competitive environment has changed we're looking at whether we should change our timetable. We certainly won't launch after Sky though." Mr Davidson said a full launch in the autumn was now just one of several possible options. "We've only had 24 hours to absorb the news from BIB. It may be prudent to have an early but smaller trial launch to work out whether the systems are right."

BIB had hoped to begin broadcasting up to 200 digital entertainment, shopping and information channels this year but was hit by delays to the launch of a new Astra satellite.

Telewest also cast doubt on whether BIB set-top boxes, which decode programmes, would work with cable. BIB claimed an additional component would allow cable access

now it has not been financially involved in the bid.

It was unclear last night whether Lord Hollick's late commitment of funds could make any difference to the ITC's deliberations, which are already well advanced.

The ITC is expected to award the licences by early next month. DTN has so far been widely

regarded in the City as the outsider, with most analysts expecting all three multiple licences to go to the rival British Digital Broadcasting, a consortium of BSkyB, Carlton and Granada.

Bids for the licences had to be in by the end of January and in theory could not be altered in any way thereafter.

None the less, the addition of United will be seen as a big boost for DTN, which had appeared to lack the financial and industrial credibility of the rival bidder. DTN's only backer until yesterday was NTL, the television transmission business owned by International Cable-Tel. Other potential partners, including Merryl Lynch and NatWest, dropped out before the bid was submitted.

Barclay Knapp, chief executive of NTL, said he was confident the late involvement of United would not be ruled out of court.

"The bid is still as it was when we submitted it on 31 January, but United will become a 30 per cent shareholder in DTN if we are successful," Mr Knapp said.

DTB did not return calls last night but was widely believed to be considering an appeal.

One analyst said: "It's all very well for DTN to say the bid as submitted to the ITC has not been changed, but the ITC cannot fail to take this latest development into account. It's a crafty move."

There has been speculation

that the licence might be split with two of the multiplexes off offer going to DTN and one to BSkyB.

This is believed to be the approach most favoured by the Government, which is concerned about BSkyB extending its present near-monopoly of subscription television on rival platforms.

Hollick invests £120m in bid for digital terrestrial licence

Lord Hollick's United News & Media is joining Digital Television Network, one of two bidders for the licence to run digital terrestrial television, with a promised investment of £120m over four years.

United has always been part of DTN's programming submission to the Independent Television Commission, but until

now it has not been financially involved in the bid.

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COMMENT

The fabulous real returns they have enjoyed on equities over the past 10 years hardly support the case for an extra top-up, courtesy of other taxpayers'

Pension funds defend a skewed playing field

The pension funds are getting in early in warning the new Government not to meddle, as well they should, for abolition of the tax credit enjoyed by pension funds on dividend income is an obvious and very probable target for Labour. Having been taken unawares by Norman Lamont four years ago, when he raised £1bn by reducing the ACT from 25 to 20 per cent, they are not about to roll over without a well-orchestrated fight.

At stake is the £4bn annually of tax on dividend income that gross funds are able to claim back from the Government. Because the companies that pay the tax are able to offset this advance payment against subsequent corporation tax bills, the only loser in the current system is the Government.

Actually the loss of revenue in the last 12 months has probably been a great deal more, thanks to the flood of special dividends, share buy-backs and other ingenious wheezes the City has dreamt up to leg over the Treasury. If the penny has finally dropped in Whitehall, it is arguable that the City has only itself to blame.

For all its bluster, the NAPF doesn't really have a credible argument against the reformers. The tax credit, designed with the admittedly worthy aim of encouraging retirement savings, represents a severe skewing of the playing field on which pension funds compete with other forms of saving via equities. The NAPF claim that the abolition of ACT would reduce the real return on shares is also more apparent than actual if you

believe figures from PDMF which suggest the scrapping of tax relief would only reduce the inflation-adjusted return by about 0.75 per cent. Furthermore, the fabulous real returns pension funds have enjoyed on equities over the past 10 years hardly support the case for an extra top-up, courtesy of other taxpayers.

Perhaps the only sensible argument against tampering with the system is that companies facing a reduction in the value of their pension funds would be forced to top them up, thus reducing their taxable profits and lowering the tax take through general corporation tax. What the Government takes with one hand it could be forced to give back with the other. Again, the likely effect here is probably exaggerated by the industry.

Set against this is the self-evident truism that the fiscal privilege accorded the pension funds encourages companies to over-distribute their profits at the expense of long-term investment. There is no incentive to keep money within a business taxed at 33 per cent when the marginal rate for dividend payments is only 13 per cent. The effect of the present system, therefore, is to favour short-term indirect investment over long-term direct investment. This is a philosophical justification for abolition added to the more practical one of raising revenue. The new Chancellor would none the less be unwise to view this pleasing coincidence of purpose as proving the case. At the very

least, the abolition or phasing out of dividend tax credits ought to be balanced by matching reductions in corporate tax to provide real incentive to direct investment. Ideally there should be a quite lengthy and wide-ranging review of the whole system of corporation tax. But then this is a Chancellor in a hurry and with a pressing need for revenue.

Don't rule us out of rejoining ERM

Chancellor who can astound everybody by declaring the Bank of England independent one morning probably would be capable of deciding to take Britain back into the exchange rate mechanism before breakfast the next day. That, at least, seems to have been the reasoning of those traders in the currency markets who accepted the rumour that sterling was about to re-enter the ERM at a rate of DM2.50. After all, the Labour government has been cosying up to the Europeans all week.

The Treasury scoffed at the rumour, but the fact that it was neither true nor plausible yesterday does not mean that it never will be. Gordon Brown said earlier this week that the UK was very unlikely to join the first wave of the single currency. That means the question of sterling's relationship to the euro will need to be resolved, and it seems very possible that the Government will join the

ERM version two planned for "outs". This will not be the ERM as we knew it at the time of our national humiliation in 1992. Sterling would be linked at an agreed rate to the composite euro, rather than being rushed in at an inappropriate rate against the German mark. Furthermore, the permissible bands of variation would be much wider than they were up to 1992. British membership would be seen as a signal of honourable intentions towards eventual membership of the single currency, so sterling would be supported by intervention from the European Central Bank if necessary. And what could be more appealing than announcing sterling's candidature for the ERM when Britain takes over the presidency of the Commission on 1 January?

After all, the UK will be overseeing the process of deciding which other members qualify for the euro despite being one of the countries least likely to want to join.

Labour dances on the bones of Clarke's PFI

Poor old Kenneth Clarke. Labour is truly dancing on his bones. Not content with consigning the Ken and Eddie show to the dustbin of history, Gordon Brown has now taken the shears to another of the former Chancellor's pet projects, the Private Finance Initiative.

Henceforth, Whitehall will no longer

have to test its capital spending plans against the PFI to get the go-ahead. Before the mandarins gleefully take out their cheque books, however, there is one small snag. Nor will there be any more public money to finance their wish lists. In fact there will be less. Mr Brown and his Paymaster General, Geoffrey Robinson, have stuck rigidly to one thing they inherited from Mr Clarke and that is his last set of Red Book forecasts showing a continuing decline in the capital budget and a rising curve of PFI projects. So much for the pretence that the PFI was ever going to be anything other than an excuse for substituting public money with private funds.

The abolition of the universal testing rule nevertheless makes sense. The PFI was becoming so cluttered that deserving cases, such as hospital projects, were in danger of dying before they got out of the waiting room.

By keeping the choke collar in place around the capital budget, the Paymaster General has left Whitehall with an incentive to dream up more PFI projects. The problem is he left with, however, finding a mechanism to sort the wheat from the chaff. Mr Robinson has asked Malcolm Bates, a one-time member of Harold Wilson's Industrial Reorganisation Corporation (remember that?) to come up with the solution. All contributions will be gratefully received, particularly since Mr Bates has been asked to report back in just a month.

Labour acts quickly to change PFI review rules

Michael Harrison

The Government yesterday launched a lightning review of the Private Finance Initiative and, as a first step, scrapped the rule that all Whitehall spending projects have to be tested against the PFI before being allowed to proceed.

The review will be conducted by Malcolm Bates, chairman of Premier Farnell and the insurance group Pearl, who has been asked to report back to the Paymaster General, Geoffrey Robinson, by 13 June. Business leaders have welcomed the announcement.

Mr Robinson said the aim of the review would be to see how the PFI could best be streamlined and what obstacles there were to bringing projects to fruition.

In the meantime, he said he was kicking over the first obstacle by ending the requirement for universal testing of projects against the PFI. However, Mr Robinson said this did not mean that government departments should expect any increase in their own budgets for

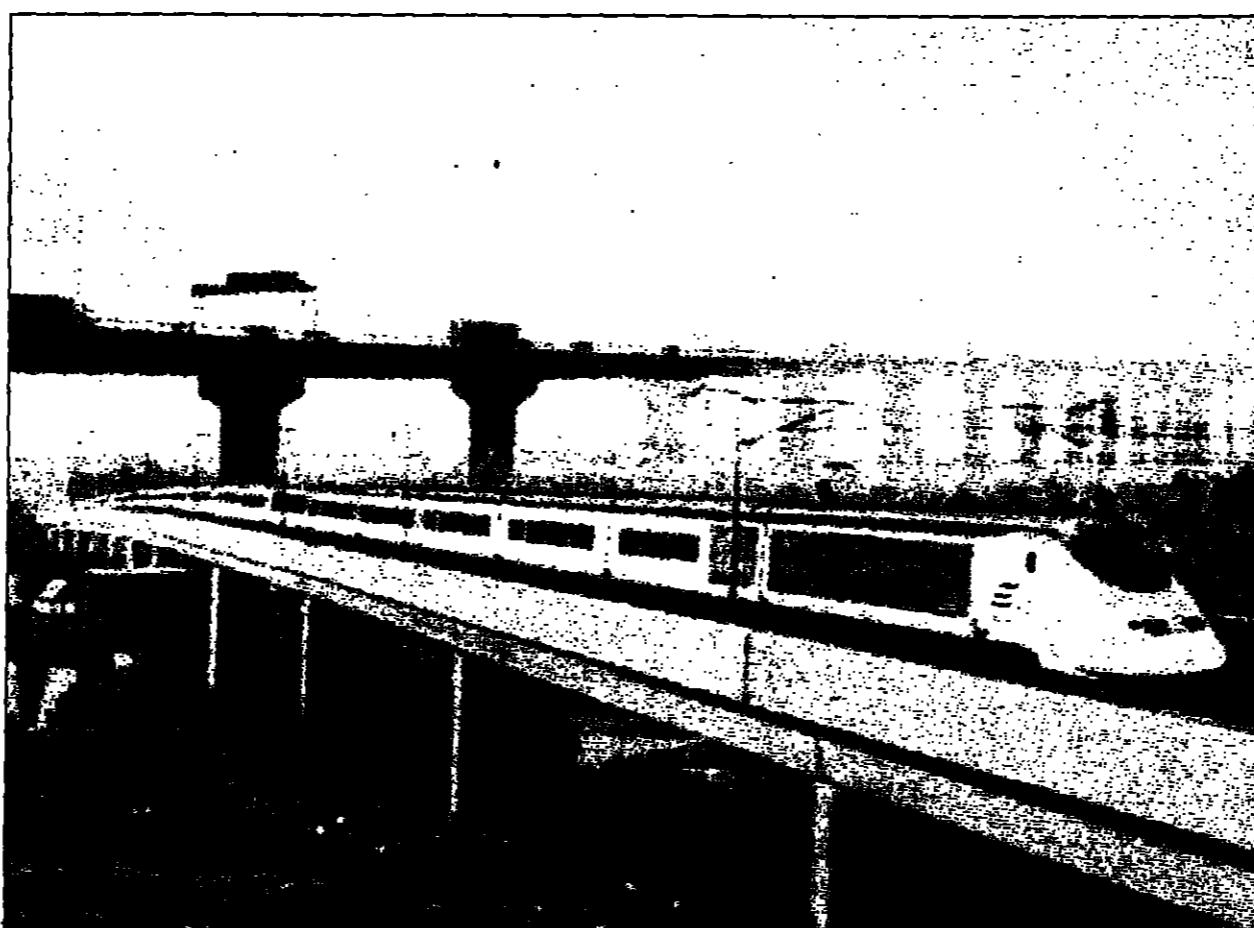
capital projects. Labour is sticking to the capital spending controls it inherited from the Conservatives which show a £3bn decline in capital budgets by the end of the decade.

The universal testing rule was introduced two years ago by the former Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, in an attempt to kick-start the initiative. Since then, however, it has been widely criticised, not least by the Confederation of British Industry, for clogging up the system and delaying approval for important projects, particularly in the health field.

The CBI recommended that projects costing less than £10m should be exempted from this particular requirement.

Mr Robinson said the rule was "a recipe for frustration and delay and works against the concept of prioritisation which we want to build into the process."

So far £1bn worth of contracts have been given the go-ahead under the PFI although a large proportion of that total is accounted for by a handful of projects such as the £3.5bn Channel Tunnel rail link. More



The line to private finance: An artist's impression of a Eurostar international train emerging from the Essex side of the tunnel to be built under the Thames as part of the Channel Tunnel rail link, which has won £3.5bn of PFI funding

than 1,400 projects have been identified by Whitehall departments as PFI candidates. However, only about 10 per cent of these involve investment of more than £10m.

The review will examine the role that could best be played by a new public-private sector taskforce working within the Treasury and reporting directly to the Paymaster General. It will also examine the effectiveness

of the Private Finance Panel, the full-time body set up to administer the PFI, and what "generic obstacles" to progress there are.

In its Business Manifesto, Labour set out a 12-point plan for reforming the PFI. Under this deal already signed would be allowed to proceed but every other potential partnership would be subjected to more rigorous appraisal to avoid long delays.

abolition of universal testing is a major policy leap for the PFI.

Labour also pledged to draw up new guidelines on tendering for partnership projects in consultation with the National Audit Office and the Audit Commission.

The CBI welcomed Mr Robinson's announcement.

Charles Cox, chairman of its public procurement and efficiency committee, said: "The company was until recently a director of the Private Finance Panel and was deputy managing director of GEC for 12 years until March this year.

NAPF warns Brown over tax credits

Tom Stevenson
Financial Editor

The National Association of Pension Funds expressed "deep concern" yesterday at the widely held belief that Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was planning to reduce or abolish the tax advantages enjoyed by pension funds.

Speaking at the association's annual conference in Harrogate, Ann Robinson, the NAPF's director general, warned the Government that an assault on the advance corporation tax (ACT) credit that institutions currently claim back from the Treasury would be "ill advised - a serious mistake."

The NAPF is concerned that, having promised not to raise individual income tax rates, the Government will be forced to attack the corporate sector to plug the gaps in the public finances. It is thought the Government might view the investing institutions as a more palatable target than the companies it strenuously wooed in the run-up to the election.

Currently pension funds and other tax-exempt investors receive dividends on which the company has already paid advance corporation tax at a rate of 20 per cent. The funds are able to claim this tax back from the government while the company offsets its advance pay-

ment against subsequent mainstream corporation tax bills, resulting in an overall reduction in the amount of tax collected by the government.

It is a system the NAPF defends because it argues tax is paid on the funds later when pensions are actually drawn by individual pensioners. According to Ms Robinson, "Imposing a tax on dividends to pension funds has the effect of imposing double taxation on individuals."

The cost to the government of returning tax to gross funds is estimated at up to £40bn a year, making it an obvious target for a revenue-hungry government. Four years ago, Norman Lamont reduced the rate at which advanced corporation tax was paid (and refunded) from 25 per cent, raising around £1bn.

The NAPF argues that abolishing or reducing the rebate might be self-defeating because it would mean profitable companies had to divert more of their retained profits into their pension funds to maintain their ability to pay promised pensions. This would lessen the apparent tax benefit to the government by reducing the amount of mainstream corporation tax it could raise from businesses.

Another side effect might be a reduction in the pension fund revenues of local authorities and other public sector employers.

Comment, page 23

ERM rumour trips up sterling

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

The pound fell to its lowest level for several weeks yesterday after speculation that the Government planned to take Britain back into the exchange rate mechanism at a rate of DM2.50 briefly swept the currency market.

The Treasury denied the rumour, and investors later bought sterling at the lower level. But its exchange rate against the German mark ended nearly 4 pence lower at just under DM2.77 last night.

"The Government has no intention of joining the ERM," a Treasury official said firmly.

Some City conspiracy theo-

rists said the unattributed rumour was the ideal way of getting the pound down from its recent, uncomfortable heights.

Others said that after this week's surprise announcement about the Bank of England's independence anything was possible.

But Neil MacKinnon, chief economist at Citibank, said:

"No new Chancellor wants to be faced with a slide in the currency in his first week in office." He pointed out that the fall yesterday was exaggerated by the fact that most of it took place overnight in New York, where trading in sterling is light.

Alison Correll, an analyst at PaineWebber, said: "This kind of speculation was to be expected. The pound is the last

European currency where there is any scope for it."

Some analysts said that it was plausible that the new Government would want to take Britain back into the exchange rate mechanism, in the new spirit of co-operation with the EU.

But they saw the British presidency of the European Union in the first half of 1998 as the more likely occasion, especially as the Chancellor has all but ruled out British membership of the single currency in the first wave.

Although the ERM rumour was the focus of attention, the pound's welcome weakness yesterday was probably due at least as much to a decline in the

US dollar. It dived against the yen following strong indications that the Japanese authorities will not let the yen fall any further.

The US currency dropped to 112.4 for the first time in a month, compared with its 1 May high of 112.50.

Etsuko Sakakibara, a Ministry of Finance official, said yesterday he could foresee the dollar falling to 110.3. It is very unusual for Japanese officials to make such an explicit comment.

"Mr Sakakibara's willingness to depart from the conventions is an indication of how serious the Japanese authorities now are," said Stephen Lewis, chief economist at London Bond Broking.

This will keep up the pressure for further tightening of

monetary or fiscal policy in coming months," said Michael Saunders at Salomon Brothers.

Industry is keen to take the strain for fear higher interest rates will keep the pound strong.

The results of the Confederation of British Industry's monthly survey backed Gordon Brown's decision to raise interest rates by a quarter-point earlier this week, despite a subdued industrial performance.

City experts said yesterday that the economy was still expanding fast enough to require further action, whether through tax or interest rate increases.

"This will keep up the pressure for further tightening of

policy of controlling inflation largely through interest rates needed to be changed urgently.

If sterling remained at current levels, the deterioration in the competitiveness of the UK economy would accelerate.

British Steel, one of the companies hardest hit by sterling's strengthening, yesterday warned that it was putting 8.5 million jobs at risk.

In a briefing note sent to ministers and MPs in steel constituencies, its chairman, Sir Brian Moffat, called on the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, to introduce measures that would help bring sterling down to a "sustainable level" of DM2.40-DM2.50.

The note says that the UK's

consumers, the CBI reported in its distributive trades survey yesterday that the annual rate of increase in retail sales volumes in April was the highest since November, and expected to continue into May.

The balance of retailers reporting sales volumes higher rather than lower than a year ago was 42 per cent, up from 33 per cent a year earlier.

The sharpest rises were in furniture and carpets, and clothing, with footwear sales also strong.

Motor traders also reported an increase in annual sales volumes, confounding downbeat expectations after a drop in March.

BTR profit warning, page 24

High street spree gathers pace

Diane Coyle
and Michael Harrison

The national shopping spree gathered pace last month, with the volume of sales on the high street expanding at the fastest pace since November.

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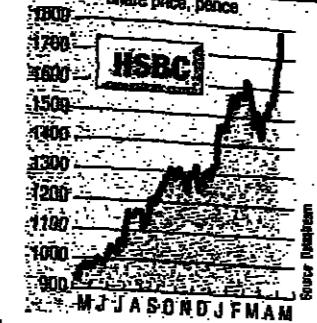
...BECAUSE WITH DIRECT DEBIT BILLS CAN BE SPREAD AND IF AN AMOUNT OR DATE OF A DD SHOULD EVER CHANGE, YOU'LL BE NOTIFIED WELL IN ADVANCE.

UK BANKS AND BUILDING SOCIETIES

DD YOUR DOUGH

Data Bank		
FSE 100	4580.4	+42.9
FSE 250	4510.4	-8.9
FSE 350	2226.2	+15.9
SEQ VOLUME	958M shares	48,701 bargains
Gems Index	96.59	-0.05

Share spotlight



Sticking with ex-mutual benefits smarter investors

The "smarter investor" stayed with Alliance & Leicester when the former building society became a bank. Their shares, which opened at 542p nearly three weeks ago, yesterday reached 626.5p with a 41p gain.

The 600,000 members who elected to sell their entitlement through auctions organised by stockbroker Cazenove collected 533.7p a share.

During its stock market life A&L has only briefly been below the auction price when it touched 533p.

The share performance has made nonsense of most of the forecasts drifting around in the weeks before the flotation. In the few days ahead of the debut opinion hardened with estimates of the opening price stretching to 540p.

The shares of the unlucky 600,000 were parcelled up and sold through auction to institutional investors. The highest

price paid was believed to be 575p.

The rip-roaring A&L success is due to the headlong bull market in general and the money share boom in particular. Banks, insurance companies and anything with a financial inclination has become hot property as fund managers strive to adjust their portfolio weightings to the exploding financial sector.

They need to build their holdings in the likes of A&L and the other converters, Halifax and so on, from zero base. In the meantime, they have to settle for greater exposure by buying into existing quoted companies.

Their problem is underlined by Abbey National, where private investors still have around half the capital eight years after conversion.

Abey shares stretched to a new peak of 884.5p, up 36p, and Lloyds TSB put on 24.5p,



MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

stock market reporter of the year

to 602.5p. HSBC led the banking pack with a 91p surge to 1,795p; National Westminster, Standard Chartered and General Accident were others in demand.

Stories persist Halifax intend to use its quoted muscle for bids soon after it arrives next month. One possible target is seen as Norwich Union, the insurance group due to float a few weeks afterwards.

Financials were a large factor behind another upbeat market display, with Footsie surging to a new peak of 4,580.4 points, up 42.9. For much of the session it was lower in the water but a heady New York opening turned the

tide, underpinning the strength of financials. It was, however, once again a market of the have and have-nots. Second and third liners drifted with the FSE 250 index off 8.6 points.

J Sainsbury, the supermarket chain continued to prosper from its profit decline had been arrested; it was also helped by stories of a meat tie-up with Marks & Spencer. A Sainsbury spokeswoman described the rumour as "pure speculation" and then said: "We never comment on rumours."

However, according to market sources, the two retail giants plan a joint operation to re-establish the appeal of British meat. They intended to

sell under a joint brand name through specially created departments in their stores. Sainsbury rose 11p to 360p; Marks firmed to 505.5p.

BTR was the day's casualty, crashing 36.5p to 231p following its profit warning. A big deal, thought to be by SBC Warburg, increased the discomfort. Warburg is thought to have sold around 80 million shares at 219p, having picked them up at 215.5p.

MEPC, the property group, added 18.5p to 493p on Hamerston bid stories but British Land gave ground on rights issue fears. Storehouse continued to encounter the alleged wall of negative sentiment, off 1p to 203.5p, a low.

United News & Media's attempt to move into digital television lifted the shares 13p to 735.5p, but BSkyB, with Henderson Crosthurst moving from hold to sell, fell 3.5p to 595.5p. BTV shaded to 305p

after a lunchtime meeting with Henderson.

House of Fraser, following a Henderson-hosted dinner at London's Ritz Hotel, firmed 2.5p to 174p and Rank was little changed at 443.5p after the stockbroker's dinner at the Howard Hotel.

Cable & Wireless put on 5p to 501.5p; Hong Kong Telecom results were encouraging but the company remained silent about its future HKT relationship.

Railtrack jumped 20p to 447.5p; the second instalment of 190p is due next month. Stagecoach advanced 19.5p to 618.5p as its South West Trains off-shoot escaped further penalties.

Aston Villa continued to find the going soggy, falling 120p to 950p against an 1,100p placing. Pan American Resources lost 14p to 34.5p on the seeming break down in its relationship with BHP.

Petra Diamonds lost a little lustre although the signalled trading statement suggested a significant discovery. Its prospect in South Africa has produced stones representing 30.81 carats per 100 tonnes, a particularly high yield. Other finds are expected. The shares fell 7p to 57.5p against last week's 50p placing.

Ask Central, the latest restaurant venture of the Kaye family (Golden Egg and Garfunkels) gained 22.5p to 217.5p. It is expected to double profits to £1.4m this year. The company, raising £5.3m through a rights issue, is valued at £1.75m per restaurant; PizzaExpress is at £3.2m.

Jordac, the nuclear decommissioner, produced interims of £234,000 and could make £500,000 this year with film next. The shares are 51.5p.

Share Price Data									
Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 20 per cent as a percentage of the share price. The share earnings (P/E ratio) is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding dividends. Other details: r = Rights x = Extra dividend; s = All or Unlisted Securities Market; t = Suspended; u = Partly Paid pm Nt Paid Shares; + = AM Stock. Source: FT Information									
The Independent Index									
The Index allows you to access real-time share prices by phone from London Stock Exchange. Simply dial 0891 123 235, and when prompted to do so enter the 4-digit code printed next to each share. To access the latest financial reports dial 0891 233 followed by one of the two-digit codes below.									
FTSE 100 - Realtime 00 Sterling Rates 04 Privatisation issues 36 UK Stock Market Report 01 Button Report 06 Water Shares 39 UK Company News 02 Wall St Report 20 Electricity Shares 40 Foreign Exchange 03 Tokyo Market 21 High Street Banks 41 Anyone with a tone-dial telephone can use this service. For a detailed description of The Independent Index, including its portfolio facility, phone 0891 123 333. For assistance, call our helpline 071 873 4378 (90am - 50pm).									
Market leaders: Top 20 volumes									
Stock	Vol 1000	Stock	Vol 1000	Stock	Vol 1000	Stock	Vol 1000	Stock	Vol 1000
SITR	2250000	Salway	150000	Ply Bl Scotland	20000	NatWest Bank	500000		
BTG	250000	BP	300000	Bank of Scotland	50000	Tesco	500000		
BT	770000	Tel & Lyc	50000	National Grid	60000	Trinity	50000		
Lloyds TSB	1970000	Centrica	50000	Abbey National	500000	Park Group	500000		
ASDA Group	1500000	Salisbury	500000	LASMO	470000				
FTSE 100 Index hour by hour									
Open	4582.8	Close 5/7	11.80	4582.9	down 4.6				
Open 4582.8	down 0.9	12.00	4581.8	down 5.9					
Open 4582.8	down 0.4	13.00	4582.4	down 1.1					
On Exploration									
Stock	Price	Stock	Price	Stock	Price	Stock	Price	Stock	Price
Albion Group	100	Arithon	100	Ashtead	100	Barclays	100	Bell & Ross	100
BP	100	Barlow Col	100	Bevan	100	BHP	100	BHP Billiton	100
BT	100	Bentley	100	Bentley	100	BTC	100	BTC	100
Centrica	100	BHP Corp	100	BHP Corp	100	BTC Corp	100	BTC Corp	100
Conoco	100	BHP Corp	100	BHP Corp	100	BTC Corp	100	BTC Corp	100
Gascoyne	100	BHP Corp	100	BHP Corp	100	BTC Corp	100	BTC Corp	100
Halliburton	100	BHP Corp	100	BHP Corp	100	BTC Corp	100	BTC Corp	100
Imperial Oil	100	BHP Corp	100	BHP Corp	100	BTC Corp	100	BTC Corp	100
Marathon Oil	100	BHP Corp	100	BHP Corp	100	BTC Corp	100	BTC Corp	100
Occidental Petroleum	100	BHP Corp	100	BHP Corp	100	BTC Corp	100	BTC Corp	100
Phillips Petroleum	100	BHP Corp	100	BHP Corp	100	BTC Corp	100	BTC Corp	100
Statoil	100	BHP Corp	100	BHP Corp	100	BTC Corp	100	BTC Corp	100
Texaco	100	BHP Corp	100	BHP Corp	100	BTC Corp	100	BTC Corp	100
Unocal	100	BHP Corp	100	BHP Corp	100	BTC Corp	100	BTC Corp	100
Venezuela	100	BHP Corp	100	BHP Corp	100	BTC Corp	100	BTC Corp	100
Oil, Integrated									
Stock	Price	Stock	Price	Stock	Price	Stock	Price	Stock	Price
Amoco	100	Anglo	100	Arco	100	BP	100	Chevron	100
BP	100	Anglo	100	Arco	100	Chevron	100	Chevron	100
Exxon	100	Anglo	100	Arco	100	Chevron	100	Chevron	100
Exxon	100	Anglo	100	Arco	100	Chevron	100	Chevron	100
Exxon	100	Anglo	100	Arco	100	Chevron	100	Chevron	100
Exxon	100	Anglo	100	Arco	100	Chevron	100	Chevron	100
Exxon	100	Anglo	100	Arco	100	Chevron	100	Chevron	100
Exxon	100	Anglo	100	Arco	100	Chevron	100	Chevron	100
Exxon	100	Anglo	100	Arco	100	Chevron	100	Chevron	100
Other Financial									
Stock	Price	Stock	Price	Stock	Price	Stock	Price	Stock	Price
American Express	100	Amoco	100	Anglo American	100	Barclays	100	Barclays	100
Barclays	100	Amoco	100	Anglo American	100	Barclays	100	Barclays	100
Barclays	100	Amoco	100	Anglo American	100	Barclays	100	Barclays	100

Minister plugs in to power row

In the first of a series of articles on Labour, business and the City, Chris Godsmark asks what the new Government means for utility regulation

John Battle, the new Energy and Science Minister, yesterday held his first talks with the two energy regulators, with the delicate question of whether to delay the start of domestic power and gas competition understood to be high on the agenda.

No details were given of the meetings with Clare Spottiswoode, gas industry regulator or her electricity counterpart, Professor Stephen Littlechild. Yet the relationship between government and the regulators, something the Conservatives deliberately kept unclear, is threatening to become one of Mr Battle's biggest headaches.

The DTI may not be the highest-profile department during Labour's storm into office, but the seemingly arcane technicalities of electricity competition represent not only one of the most pressing issues on its agenda but threaten to undermine the drive to put consumer interests above those of shareholders – something Mr Battle described as a "priority" just hours after being given the job.

Dieter Helm, energy expert and head of the Oxera consultancy group explained: "I think John has to act very quickly. The easy option is to muddle through, but by then it could be too late to avoid chaos. Everyone knows domestic power competition will be delayed. It's a question of whether he can take difficult decisions."

Several regional electricity companies (RECs) have so far requested talks with Mr Battle with the thinly disguised aim of postponing competition, which on Professor Littlechild's timetable would roll-out between April and September next year. Privately, several RECs believe the process is hopelessly tight, although publicly no company has said it would fail to meet the deadline.



Fresh brief: John Battle, the minister, has already met gas and electricity regulators

who, before the election made clear their doubts about the windfall utility tax.

Labour has suggested it may merge the gas and electricity watchdogs into one department, though Mr Helm said the outcome may be less radical. "I don't think he will replace the current regulators when their contracts expire."

One thing Mr Battle has no shortage of is advice. One of his first moves was to approach Dan Cory to become a full-time paid adviser. Mr Cory, from the left-leaning think tank, the Institute for Public Policy Research, is a

well-known critic of the present system of utility regulation and of price regimes which serve up windfall gains for investors.

Mr Cory's role could, according to some observers, point to a much bigger transformation of utility regulation than anything Labour suggested in opposition. "The manifesto was fairly weakened and didn't say too much. We've got to look at changes to make regulation more accountable so it's quite open at the moment," he said.

Labour's determination to push ahead with these more general utility reforms is un-

clear. Dieter Helm argues Mr Battle may prefer to concentrate on tightening the firms' social obligations. "He may look at a social levy to meet these obligations such as cutting disconnections or preventing price differentials between regions."

If Mr Battle successfully grasps the nettle on competition and maintains reasonable relations with the regulators, he could win valuable space for a fundamental review. Yet the risks are huge. If he fails, his credibility and that of Labour's beefed-up DTI could be severely weakened.

At this rate, they might actually get the PFI to work.

Before you get too sorry for the Tories, I am delighted to reveal that Norma Major's PR woman for *Cosmopolitan*.

PEOPLE & BUSINESS

Roll this one round your mouth: "President Margaret."

No, calm down, I'm not talking about Thatcher. I'm referring to whether Margaret Beckett will be tempted to hang on to at least one of the "trappings of power" from the previous administration; that is, the title: "President of the Board of Trade."

This was, of course, Michael Heseltine's creation. Apparently, when asked this week by an underling for her thoughts on the matter, Ms Beckett merely reacted with a "quizzical look".

We wait with bated breath to see whether or not this particular trapping proves too enticing to discard.

Yet another example of New Labour getting off to a running start – Ken Clarke's pet project, the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) is set to a get a thorough overhaul.

The original idea of bringing in private money to public projects has sunk in a swamp of accounting technicalities and confusion. The man to oversee Labour's review of PFI is Geoffrey Robinson MP, ex-managing director of Jaguar and the Treasury's new Paymaster General.

The review will be carried out by Malcolm Bates, who spent 12 years at GEC as deputy managing director, and is the new chairman of Premier Farnell, the electronic components maker.

Here comes the New Labour bit: anyone wanting to make their views known to Mr Bates has only until the 13 June. So get cracking. And Mr Bates instructs people to keep their contributions short & sharp: "Keep them to two sides of A4 if possible please."

At this rate, they might actually get the PFI to work.

Before you get too sorry for the Tories, I am delighted to reveal that Norma Major's PR woman for *Cosmopolitan*.

reputation as a late-night club-goer. He was there in his position as head of Planet 24, his media group. Mr Sutherland, nicknamed "Suds", was there in his capacity as chairman of Goldman Sachs International.

If for any reason Mr Sutherland doesn't have his interim status at BP ratified as a permanent chairman, how about Sir Bob? Altogether now: "Tell me: Why I don't like Mondays..."

One doesn't normally think of the Global Markets Economics team at Bankers' Trust as cutting social satire, but so it appears.

The team's newsletter boasts a "World Exclusive" on the identities of the four outsiders who are due to be appointed to the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC). Set up by Gordon Brown to fix interest rates.

According to Peter Price, managing director of the mystery four are: Professor Sydney Trimmer, Polenta, Professor of Stakeholding, University of Islington, best known for a neo-Keynesian approach to optimum resource allocation in a municipal library environment; Dr Victoria Harpy, Chair of the Social Market Aromatherapy Research Council, formerly leader of of Brent Council's "Smash the fascist bosses anti-plutocrat support group"; Alfred "Alf" Stubbs, General Secretary, Amalgamated Union of Managerial, Technical, Educational, Scientific, Sanitary Workers and Allied Trades; and Baroness Edwina de Odbbins, who will "operate the Ouija Board".

Now why does something tell me Bankers' Trust isn't taking this committee seriously?

John Willcock

Foreign Exchange Rates

Sterling			Dollars	D-Marks
Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	Spot
US	1.6207	9.7	26.23	1000
Canada	1.6207	9.7	26.23	1000
Germany	2.2573	7.3	21.29	12075
France	9.3380	25.24	75.65	1714
Italy	2.7383	9.3	20.42	10953
Japan	2.0701	10.9	31.04	12550
UK	1.2224	6.5	18.33	10443
Denmark	1.5534	28.23	80.70	64955
Netherlands	1.5534	28.23	80.70	63044
Ireland	1.0727	9.3	20.42	10953
Norway	1.4813	33.29	95.80	70289
Spain	2.3374	21.11	85.51	14223
Sweden	2.2378	21.11	85.51	12755
Australia	2.0782	9.3	20.42	12831
Hong Kong	2.2554	80.9	194.37	7260
Malta	2.2554	80.9	194.37	25078
New Zealand	2.2554	80.9	194.37	64865
Saudi Arabia	6.0783	0.0	0.0	37505
Singapore	2.3407	0.0	0.0	14443

Interest Rates

Country	Base	6.25%	Germany	Discount	2.50%	US	Prime	8.75%	Japan	5.0%
	Spot	1 month	Canada	Discount	1 month	Fed Funds	Discount	Central	3.00%	
US	1.6207	9.7	26.23	1000	0.9857	1.75%	1.75%	2.50%	3.00%	
Canada	1.6207	9.7	26.23	1000	0.9857	1.75%	1.75%	2.50%	3.00%	
Germany	2.2573	7.3	21.29	12075	3.85	3.85	10-day Repo 5.50%	10-day Repo 5.50%	10-day Repo 5.50%	
France	9.3380	25.24	75.65	1714	3.85	3.85	10-day Repo 5.50%	10-day Repo 5.50%	10-day Repo 5.50%	
Italy	2.7383	9.3	20.42	10953	15.52	15.52	10-day Repo 5.50%	10-day Repo 5.50%	10-day Repo 5.50%	
Japan	2.0701	10.9	31.04	12550	15.52	15.52	10-day Repo 5.50%	10-day Repo 5.50%	10-day Repo 5.50%	
UK	1.2224	6.5	18.33	10443	2.70	2.70	Repo (Av)	4.0%	4.25%	
Denmark	1.5534	28.23	80.70	64955	2.70	2.70	Repo (Av)	4.0%	4.25%	
Netherlands	1.5534	28.23	80.70	63044	2.70	2.70	Repo (Av)	4.0%	4.25%	
Ireland	1.0727	9.3	20.42	10953	2.70	2.70	Repo (Av)	4.0%	4.25%	
Norway	1.4813	33.29	95.80	70289	2.70	2.70	Repo (Av)	4.0%	4.25%	
Spain	2.3374	21.11	85.51	14223	2.70	2.70	Repo (Av)	4.0%	4.25%	
Sweden	2.2378	21.11	85.51	12755	2.70	2.70	Repo (Av)	4.0%	4.25%	
Australia	2.0782	9.3	20.42	12831	2.70	2.70	Repo (Av)	4.0%	4.25%	
Hong Kong	2.2554	80.9	194.37	7260	3.5	3.5	Repo (Av)	4.0%	4.25%	
Malta	2.2554	80.9	194.37	25078	3.5	3.5	Repo (Av)	4.0%	4.25%	
New Zealand	2.2554	80.9	194.37	64865	3.5	3.5	Repo (Av)	4.0%	4.25%	
Saudi Arabia	6.0783	0.0	0.0	37505	1.4	1.4	Repo (Av)	4.0%	4.25%	
Singapore	2.3407	0.0	0.0	14443	50.55	50.55	Repo (Av)	4.0%	4.25%	

Bond Yields

Country	5yr	yield %	10yr	yield %	30yr	yield %	Country	5yr	yield %	10yr	yield %	30yr
UK	7.0%	6.82%	7.03	6.82%	7.03	6.82%	Netherlands	6.69%	6.75%	6.75	6.75	6.75
Denmark	6.63%	6.82%	6.82%	6.82%	6.82%	6.82%	Spain	5.83	7.35%	7.35	7.35	7.35
Ireland	10.27	9.21	10.27	9.21	10.27	9.21	Portugal	6.82%	6.82%	6.82%	6.82%	6.82%
Norway	14.81	13.29	14.81	13.29	14.81	13.29	Greece	6.82%	6.82%	6.82%	6.82%	6.82%
Spain	23.37	21.11	24.23	21.11	24.23	21.11	Austria	6.82%	6.82%	6.82%	6.82%	6.82%
Sweden	2.3378	21.11	24.23	21.11	24.23	21.11	Belgium	6.82%	6.82%	6.82%	6.82%	6.82%
Australia	2.0782	9.3										

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Royal end to a Flight of fancy

Racing

RICHARD EDMONDSON reports from Chester

Just as the fairy story was about to be completed in the Ormonde Stakes yesterday, Royal Court ruined it by beating the old soldier Further Flight. It was rather like Prince Charming marrying one of the ugly sisters.

Further Flight's grey dappled figure is the son you see in bedtime books and he seems to have been around since we were much younger. The 11-year-old arrived for competition yesterday with 36 starts to his name, 22 of them victories and the prospect of carrying his regular jockey, Michael Hills, to his 1,000th career success in Britain. The romantic scene was set.

If Further Flight was the good guy, the bad lad of the race was his stablemate Moonax, the 1994 St Leger winner, whose preferred diet is human flesh. There is a giveaway clue that the chestnut is not the most pleasant of customers when he is escorted into the parade ring by his lass, Joyce Wallgrave, accompanied this duty yesterday wearing a body protector and heavily wadded arm guards. She looked like Wayne Gretzky.

Moonax himself did not appear particularly cuddly. He slavered rabidly, sending saliva back over his mane, and refused to leave the paddock. Once he emerged on to a course fringed by a harlequin canopy of umbrellas the six-year-old displayed his dressage skills by going into reverse.

Darryl Holland eventually got him down to the start, where stallhandlers appeared to be drawing straws. Moonax was blindfolded and led into his stall, where he promptly squatted. This proved a cathartic act, however, and as soon as the gates opened Moonax behaved like a cherub.

Electron Dugger the field along for much of the journey but there were figures moving much more smoothly in behind. Moonax looked dangerous off the final bend, but then Further Flight, whose low head carriage suggests he might kick himself in the teeth, and Royal Court settled down to fight out the finish. Only close home did the veteran succumb.

The winner's trainer, Peter Chapple-Hyam, was formerly assistant to Further Flight's handler, Barry Hills, and he would have understood if hissing had greeted his entrance on to the stage of the winners' enclosure.

Reams Of Verse for York

Henry Cecil, who has trained six winners of the Musidora Stakes, will be represented by Reams Of Verse in Tuesday's renewal. Likely to start favourite, Reams Of Verse goes to York on the back of a good sixth behind her stablemate Sleepytime in the 1,000 Guineas. That saw her promoted to the head of Oaks.

RACING RESULTS

CHESTER 2.10: 1. RODDING CARRINGTON (4 foal) 2-1-1, 3-1, 4-1, 5-1, 6-1, 7-1, 8-1, 9-1, 10-1, 11-1, 12-1, 13-1, 14-1, 15-1, 16-1, 17-1, 18-1, 19-1, 20-1, 21-1, 22-1, 23-1, 24-1, 25-1, 26-1, 27-1, 28-1, 29-1, 30-1, 31-1, 32-1, 33-1, 34-1, 35-1, 36-1, 37-1, 38-1, 39-1, 40-1, 41-1, 42-1, 43-1, 44-1, 45-1, 46-1, 47-1, 48-1, 49-1, 50-1, 51-1, 52-1, 53-1, 54-1, 55-1, 56-1, 57-1, 58-1, 59-1, 60-1, 61-1, 62-1, 63-1, 64-1, 65-1, 66-1, 67-1, 68-1, 69-1, 70-1, 71-1, 72-1, 73-1, 74-1, 75-1, 76-1, 77-1, 78-1, 79-1, 80-1, 81-1, 82-1, 83-1, 84-1, 85-1, 86-1, 87-1, 88-1, 89-1, 90-1, 91-1, 92-1, 93-1, 94-1, 95-1, 96-1, 97-1, 98-1, 99-1, 100-1, 101-1, 102-1, 103-1, 104-1, 105-1, 106-1, 107-1, 108-1, 109-1, 110-1, 111-1, 112-1, 113-1, 114-1, 115-1, 116-1, 117-1, 118-1, 119-1, 120-1, 121-1, 122-1, 123-1, 124-1, 125-1, 126-1, 127-1, 128-1, 129-1, 130-1, 131-1, 132-1, 133-1, 134-1, 135-1, 136-1, 137-1, 138-1, 139-1, 140-1, 141-1, 142-1, 143-1, 144-1, 145-1, 146-1, 147-1, 148-1, 149-1, 150-1, 151-1, 152-1, 153-1, 154-1, 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sport

Herbert puts title challengers in the shade

Motor racing

DERICK ALLSOP
reports from Monte Carlo

True to character, Johnny Herbert retained a sense of humour and realism as his team told him he was fastest in practice for Sunday's Monaco Grand Prix. "Sorry it's the wrong day," he said ruefully.

Unofficial practice day – always Thursday rather than Friday here in the Principality – has the capacity to produce meaningless scenarios and the con-

test proper begins with tomorrow's qualifying session.

However, Herbert's elevation to the top of the Formula One practice charts for the first time after a century of races is a significant gauge of the progress he and the Sauber-Petronas have made in tandem.

Certainly there was nothing half-baked in the endeavours of Michael Schumacher and Jacques Villeneuve, the two drivers closest to the Englishman. And try suggesting to Heinz-Harald Frentzen, winner of the San Marino Grand Prix

a fortnight ago, that his commitment was diminished. He crashed his Williams-Renault into a barrier in vain pursuit of Herbert's time.

Herbert's current driving is by his natural demeanour: a joy to encounter. He professes himself at home with Sauber, comfortable and appreciated. And, he says, the traumas of his life and career have insulated him against the pressures of F1.

Herbert explained: "I had to get over my accident in 1988 and then difficult times at Lotus and Benetton. There's a lot more

mental warfare in F1 these days and I've survived it because I'm tougher now. Going through all I went through has helped me cope with today's F1, where you often find drivers head-to-head and criticising each other. We had it with Michael Schumacher and Damon Hill."

"I've not got myself involved in that sort of thing and I'm happier now than I have been for three or four years. I'm with a team where everyone is working to the same end."

Herbert, a resident of Monaco, is usually to be seen on these

streets travelling within the legal speed limit of 25mph at the wheel of his jeep or astride his Harley-Davidson. Local knowledge may well have helped yesterday, but at 180mph the familiar landmarks mean little.

He said: "Silverstone is still my real home track, but it is nice and special when you do well here. Everyone wants to win at Monaco. It's a great challenge, perhaps the greatest challenge of all."

Damon Hill's objective this weekend is to finish a race for the first time in the Arrows-Yamaha. So far the champion's

tale has been one of frustration, leading to speculation about his future. After taking ninth place yesterday, he sought to put the record straight on his supposed threat to quit the team unless they "get their act together".

He said: "I've made no threats merely a statement of fact. I'm telling the situation as it is. We have had problems and the team know they have to be fixed. A huge amount needs to come if we are to be competitive by the middle of the season.

I've got an open mind as far as next season is concerned, but at the moment I'm concentrating my efforts on Arrows."

MONACO GRAND PRIX: Free Practice (2.025 miles): 1 J. Herbert (GB) Sauber-Petronas 1mn 21.188sec; 92.75m; 2 M. Schumacher (Ger) Formula 1 1mn 21.245sec; 4 D. Frentzen (D) Jordan-Peugeot 1mn 21.463sec; 5 G. Berger (AUS) Benetton-Ford 1mn 21.578sec; 6 M. Hakkinen (Fin) McLaren-Mercedes 1mn 21.635sec; 8 D. Hill (GB) Arrows-Yamaha 1mn 21.675sec; 10 J. Alzen (FRA) Ligier 1mn 21.722sec; 12 J. Villeneuve (Can) Williams-Renault 1mn 21.767sec; 14 N. Larini (It) Sauber-Yamaha 1mn 21.823sec; 16 S. Agurra (Spa) Williams-Renault 1mn 21.852sec; 17 M. Pantano (Fra) Prost-Mugen-Honda 1mn 21.895sec; 18 M. Salo (Fin) Tyrrell-Ford 1mn 21.932sec; 19 J. Massa (Bra) Minardi-Petronas 1mn 21.933sec; 21 D. Coulthard (GB) McLaren-Mercedes 1mn 21.978sec; 22 S. Nakajima (Jpn) Leyton House Prost-Mugen-Honda 1mn 21.980sec; 23 N. Trulli (It) Prost-Mugen-Honda 1mn 21.993sec; 24 K. Yamamoto (Jpn) Leyton House Prost-Mugen-Honda 1mn 21.993sec; 25 U. Katayama (Jpn) March-Honda 1mn 21.993sec.

Custom Made makes mark

Equestrianism

GENEVIEVE MURPHY
reports from Badminton

David O'Connor made his factory start at the Badminton Horse Trials on Custom Made, with whom he was leading after the dressage here last year before finishing the contest in third place.

This time the US rider shared the lead at the end of the first day of dressage with Linda Algeo, son, a 25-year-old mauls teacher from Sweden.

This is Algotsson's first appearance at Badminton, but she shows no signs of being overawed by the big occasion. She intends to take all the quick routes on 16-year-old Lafayette when she tackles the cross-country tomorrow.

O'Connor's Irish-bred mount became a little excited yesterday before the second dressage change, a new movement in three-day event dressage which requires the horse to change leading leg at canter when coming back to trot. Custom Made was otherwise polished and responsive to his rider.

Paddy Muir is lying third and best of the British on her grey gelding, Archie Brown, who finished ninth here last year. Close behind comes Daisy Dick, the 25-year-old daughter of former Grand National winner, Dave Dick, on Headley Bravo.

New Zealand's Olympic champion, Blyth Tait, is lying equal seventh on Chesterfield despite the horse making a few errors through being tense. Like everyone else, Tait is pleased with the going that has been greatly improved by the use of an aerator, which provided holes for the recent rain to drain into firm ground.

Both Leslie Law on Capitano (now 38th) and Ian Stark on Arakai (26th) had disappointing tests, but they each have another chance when they ride their second horses today.

MITSUBISHI MOTORS BATHURST HORSE TRIALS: Standings after first day of dressage: 1 L. Algeo (USA) 19.6; 2 Linda Algeo (USA) 19.6; 3 David O'Connor (GB) 19.6; 4 Headley Bravo (P) 19.6; 5 Daren Powers (A) 19.6; 6 Blyth Tait (NZL) 19.6; 7 Linda Algeo (GB) 19.6; 8 Archie Brown (GB) 19.6; 9 D. Dick (GB) 19.6; 10 C. Mullally (GB) 19.6; 11 S. Nakajima (JPN) 19.6; 12 K. Yamamoto (JPN) 19.6; 13 U. Katayama (JPN) 19.6; 14 K. Yamamoto (GB) 19.6; 15 D. Codd (GB) 19.6; 16 D. O'Connor (GB) 19.6; 17 D. Codd (GB) 19.6; 18 M. Salo (FIN) 19.6; 19 M. Pantano (FRA) 19.6; 20 S. Agurra (GB) 19.6; 21 D. Coulthard (GB) 19.6; 22 S. Nakajima (GB) 19.6; 23 N. Trulli (GB) 19.6; 24 K. Yamamoto (GB) 19.6; 25 U. Katayama (GB) 19.6.

Defeat for Muster on clay

Tennis

Thomas Muster, for so long regarded as virtually unbeatable on clay, was surprisingly beaten on his favourite surface when he lost 6-3, 6-2 to Hicham Arazi in the third round of the German Open yesterday. Arazi, a 23-year-old Moroccan who based in France, has won only one title in his four years on the tour.

Muster, No 3 in the world, compiled a 111-5 record on clay in 1995-96, including a 40-match winning streak, the second longest in the open era. Of his 44 career titles, 40 have come on clay.

In stark contrast, Boris Becker has never won a tournament on the surface in his otherwise illustrious career. He was also beaten, going down to Felix Mantilla, 7-6, 6-2.

Becker, Wimbledon champion three times, was frustrated by the spectacular passing shots of the Spaniard as he attempted to progress in an event he has failed to win 11 times.

Neither Becker nor Mantilla was happy when the umpire, Steve Ulrich, called a rain break at 6-6 in the tie-break. It drizzled lightly most of the day, and while Becker and Mantilla were sent to the locker rooms, play continued on outside courts.

When they returned, Mantilla passed Becker with a backhand. Becker broke his racket and served with a new one, but Mantilla hit another superb backhand passing return off Becker's second serve that clinched the set.

In the second, a Becker forehand error put Mantilla a break up, and he whipped in another backhand passing shot to seize a 4-1 lead. A forehand winner gave Mantilla the match. Marcelo Rios, champion in Monte Carlo last week, lost to another Spaniard, Alberto Berasategui, 6-4, 6-2.

Martina Hingis, who injured her knee falling off a horse last month, says she expects to be fit for the French Open. The 16-year-old Swiss World No 1, has been forced to pull out of three tournaments since suffering the injury on 21 April. Despite fears that she could also miss the French Open, Hingis said that she was optimistic about making her return at the Grand Slam tournament starting 26 May.

Results, Digest, page 29

Sussex put to sword by Brown

Cricket

DEREK PRINGLE
reports from Lord's
Middlesex 490-9 dec
Sussex 44-3

This match has so far flattered to deceive. But while two centuries and five wickets by a leg-spinner tends to imply cricketing perfection on a balmy summer's day, Lord's was anything but an enticing prospect, as rain and cold winds kept spectators away and players wrapped up like Michelin men.

Only one place – a faulty hotplate in the Warner stand kitchen – was hotter than it ought to be and seven of London's finest fire engines soon had it under control. Play was not held up but the four occupants of the Warner stand had to temporarily find seating elsewhere as Keith Brown, Middlesex's second centurion, and Angus Fraser, with a hard-hitting 35, made merry with a now-willing Sussex attack.

It was the only time Brown indulged himself as he notched up an unbeaten 144, the 13th ton of a career that began in 1984 and his first since 1995. His palette of shots is narrow, extending to little beyond a powerful cut and the odd canny nudge. His stay lasted 90 overs before Mike Gatting declared at 490 for 9.

His overall contribution, however, runs far deeper and his role as both stumper and steward has been vital to Middlesex's efforts over the years. An uncomplaining man at the heart of a volatile changing room, he is that dying breed, a consummate and avuncular senior pro.

Not too senior to take the bowing to task and he, along with Fraser, managed to strike a six to the shorter Grandstand boundary as the pair added 78 in 74 balls.

For Sussex, only Amer Khan, a muscular leg-spinner whose action nods more towards

Shane Warne than it does to his home-town hero, Abdul Qadir, would have left the field a satisfied man. He may have ended the innings with 5 for 137, but yesterday's analysis of 4 for 66 from 20 overs, which included bowling with a slippery new ball, was just reward for perseverance within a dispirited attack clearly missing several of its big guns.

The disparity between these two sides became even more apparent when Middlesex bowled. But if Fraser, with his gampling approach, was the man to do the damage on paper, it was his greener partner James Hewitt, operating from the Nursery End, who got his name into the scorebook.

Bowling at little more than



Present arms: Northamptonshire's Kevin Curran pads up to a delivery from Graham Rose on his way to 73 yesterday

Photograph: Peter Jay

Sharp Caddick comes in from the cold

HENRY BLOFIELD

reports from Northampton
Northamptonshire 185
Somerset 23-3

One could only assume that the reason it did not snow for the second day running at the County Ground was that it was too cold. Andy Caddick managed to hold the ball well and took his figures to 6 for 65

when Northamptonshire's last six wickets fell for 59 runs. In all, the weather allowed 33.4 overs.

Bowling from the pavilion end, Caddick was a nasty proposition for the Northamptonshire tail, which on this evidence starts all too early. The most important wicket, though, that of Kevin Curran, fell to Graham Rose, but Caddick had a hand in that, too, for he held an excellent low catch off a wild slash at square third man.

He bowled to a slightly fuller length than he had managed on the first day and looked more

Caddick has started this season in excellent form and this may be another of Dermot Reeve's achievements now that he is in charge of the Somerset dressing room. If he can sort out Caddick's thinking, and see to it that his considerable talents are put to their best use, he will have done both England and Somerset a great service.

Caddick took four of the last six Northamptonshire wickets and Rose, with whom Curran began by off-driving for six, the other two. The only real re-

turns they met came from the last pair of Paul Taylor and Mohammad Akram, who held out for 10 overs while adding 27.

Somerset then faced 14 balls before the rain began again after tea, but when it relented there was still time for nine more overs. Akram, who is distinctly sharp, then had both the openers caught in the slips off tentative strokes and then produced a beauty which bowled Jason Kerr, the night-watchman.

Caddick had to wait until 2.25pm for his next ball, but he used his height well and although he did not move the ball much he was extremely hostile. If he continues like this he will surely have a summer of Test cricket to look forward to.

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spanning two intervals and three hold-ups for rain, Ian Sutcliffe was lbw to the first ball after lunch. Aftab Habib and Vince Wells edged successive deliveries, and Neil Johnson also fell leg-before.

Leicestershire had started the day by taking Worcestershire's last four wickets for 58. Alan Mullally finished with 4 for 86 and Gavin Haynes was unbeaten on 47 for Worcestershire.

David Lawrence, playing his first game for Gloucestershire for five years after a twice broken kneecap, had to leave the field after three overs of declining speed. He headed for the treatment room and was not seen again. The official reason was "a minor strain to the right calf".

Lynch had put on 71 with

Rob Cunliffe (43no) when Gloucestershire accepted the offer of the light at 143 for 2.

After a stand of 77 for the seventh wicket between Shaun Udal and Bill Kendall off 104, S D Udal & co young 47 S D Udal & co young 58 A D Maccarelli & c Hancock b Smith 13 S J Russell & c Hancock b Young 14 C A Connor n/c out 12 S J Russell & c Hancock b Young 14 Total (2-13.3 overs) 516 Fall (cont'd) 2-272 8-283 9-257.

Bowling: Smith 28-8-61-4; Lawrence 18-7-71-3; Young 26-2-11-3; Ball 22-2-18-1; Alleyne 22-2-11-3; Ball 22-2-18-1; Alleyne 22-2-11-3; Hancock 10-2-39-1.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE – First Innings

O'Connor puts pain behind him

GolfANDY FARRELL
Reports from Thame

After 27 years on the tour, Christy O'Connor Jnr thought he had his last good. Fat chance. "The whole family are steeped in golf," he said. "I was the only one in the house not playing. I watched the boys on television and I missed the crack."

O'Connor proved his successful return from a nasty bout of tennis elbow in his left arm with a 68 in the first round of the Benson & Hedges International. He was one behind the New Zealander Greg Turner, while Colin Montgomerie, Ian Woosnam and Bernhard Langer, in their own ways, all had 70s.

A Ryder Cup hero at The Belfry in 1989, O'Connor made a dramatic comeback, after being involved in a helicopter crash, by winning the British Masters in 1992. Since then he has suffered from Morison's Metatarsalgia, a painful foot condition, and in November 1995 was afflicted by tennis elbow.

A cheque for £3,800 for 54th place in the Volvo PGA was the sum total of the 11 tournaments he played last year. After six months and £12,000 worth of unsuccessful treatment, Conor O'Brien, the Irish Olympic doctor, put O'Connor under the laser. "It was very severe but it put me back on the road to playing golf," O'Connor said.

"It was like placing your hand on a red hot grill. You could smell the skin burning. It

was black for two days. But having a full-body MRI scan was even worse. It was an awful sensation. I wanted to die. I pressed the red emergency button to get out."

O'Connor, who will join his famous uncle Christy Snr on the Seniors tour next year, could not hold a cup of coffee in his left hand but has gradually built up his strength in that arm and returned to the tour in Dubai in February. Yesterday he collected four birdies, did not drop a shot and missed twice from inside four feet. "I am playing nicely and enjoying it," he said. "I know exactly how [Jose Maria] Olazabal must have felt, especially him being so young. I really missed it."

The Irishman made his score in the morning and despite the temperature rising – well, relatively – and the rain holding off in the afternoon, no one challenged Turner's 67. The King arrived on Tuesday to find a light smattering of snow covering the course and decided against a practice round. He was not in the pro-am on Wednesday, either, but warmed by a pair of long johns, bought by his wife Jane, his only dropped shot came at the ninth, his last hole, where he was short of the green with two drivers.

While Woosnam's round contained two birdies and 16 pars, Montgomerie was far from his consistent self. Having had three birdies and one bogey on the back nine, which he played first, he then played the front half: bogey, bogey, bogey, birdie, birdie, birdie, double bogey, birdie. "We're

playing a big golf course and eight birdies suggests something is going right," Montgomerie said, "but all those bogeys suggests there's far too much going wrong."

The main problem was coming up short with his short-irons. At the eighth, where he took six, Monty had 130 yards to the flag and hit it only 80 into a lake. There are plenty of man-made water hazards on the course but there is no need to dye them blue since they turn that colour with the cold. Montgomerie's face turned a deeper shade of red. "Something is not right and I'll phone my coach when I get home tonight," the Scot said. "It's probably an easy fault to cure, it's just finding the cure."

Woosnam did not drop a shot but was never going to pick up too many, either. "I played steady, but I didn't hole anything," said the Welshman, who only missed three greens. His long approach putt at the last tinkered on the edge of the hole and then decided to stay above ground a little longer.

BENSON AND HEDGES INTERNATIONAL OPEN (The Oxfordshire, Thame) GB or US open (The Belfry, Sutton Coldfield) 67 G Turner (GB) 68 C. Montgomerie (GB), 69 S. Woosnam (USA), 70 C. Lunde (USA), 71 J. Olazabal (Spain), 72 D. Howell (UK), 73 P. Doherty (Ireland), 74 J. Watson (USA), 75 R. McEvoy (Ireland), 76 S. Lyle (GB), 77 N. Finch (GB), 78 P. Quigley (Ireland), 79 R. Bassil (GB), 80 J. Eales (GB), 81 P. Herbert (GB), 82 P. Esten, 83 T. Bjorn (Den), 84 R. Hartson (Ireland), 85 J. Sponer, 86 G. Emerick, 87 J. Robinson, 88 P. Price, 89 Rafferty, 90 Martin (Sp), 91 J. McIlroy, 92 J. Sorenson (Den), 93 P. Barnes (GB), 94 S. Webster, 95 J. Payne, 96 P. Barnes, 97 F. Rocca (Sp), 98 I. Fazio (Sp), 99 S. Ballesteros (Sp), 100 K. Ericksen (Den), 101 S. Ham (Aus), 102 J. Henshaw (Irel), 103 J. Wadkins (GB), 104 J. McIlroy (GB), 105 J. Watson (GB), 106 J. McIlroy (GB), 107 J. Watson (GB), 108 D. Cole (Aus), 109 P. Wiegert, 110 R. Wilson, 111 J. Murray, 112 E. Conroy (Irl), 113 S. Stricker (USA), 114 W. Weatherspoon (USA), 115 P. Harrington (GB), 116 M. Palmer (GB), 117 J. McIlroy (GB), 118 R. Davis (Aus), 119 D. Choppa (Spa), 120 L. Lee (GB). Selected: 74 S. Tomaz.

Seve Ballesteros hits out of a bunker yesterday at Thame. Photograph: David Ashdown

Cotton's eruption clouds final

Rugby Union

CHRIS HEWETT

Two years ago, Will Carling described the Rugby Football Union as "57 old farts" and, in the process, succeeded in turning the Pilkington Cup final into a sides issue. Tomorrow's Twickenham showpiece is in danger of suffering a similar fate, thanks to the latest eruption of malodorous hot air from the bowels of the RFU's divided hierarchy.

The newly-constituted RFU Reform Group, headed up by Fran Cotton, the Lions manager, has circulated every English club with allegations of RFU mismanagement, undemocratic manipulation and every other nefarious activity short of first-degree murder. The accusations, which carry the full support of Cliff Brittle, the union's disenchanted executive

chairman, centre on the £87.5m broadcasting deal with BSkyB, the signing of which is imminent.

Cotton and his colleagues have repeatedly claimed that Tony Hallatt, the RFU secretary, misled member clubs over the terms contained in the interim Heads of Agreement – in particular, on the issues of pay-per-view and scheduling – and have called for his resignation. In turn, the RFU's disciplinary committee is investigating a leak of confidential documents that infuriated BSkyB executives and put the entire deal at risk.

Yesterday, RFU sources predicted Cotton and his colleagues would soon be wiping liberal amounts of egg from their faces. "We have a veto on pay-per-view and it is enshrined in black and white in the final BSkyB contract," said one. "There is no possibility of pay-per-view being introduced without our written consent. The

lawyers from both sides are close to finalising the agreement and the sooner we can go public with it, the better."

While the Reform Group continued to insist that the broadcasters would hold the whip hand over the scheduling of England international matches – in reality, BSkyB have dictated the timing of league matches since they started their live coverage of domestic club rugby three seasons ago – the RFU pointed to its own impeccable democratic credentials: four general meetings, a commission on the future of the game, an independent study and two reports into administrative structures, all instigated within the first 18 months of professionalism.

It now seems certain that more blood will be spilled at the annual meeting in July, at which the RFU intends to support a direct challenge to Brittle's

executive chairmanship. Twickenham is also pulling its wagons into a circle around Hallatt, who remains the No 1 target for Cotton and his rebels.

John Fowler, the injured Sale lock, has withdrawn from England's two-test trip to Argentina after a scratchy visit to a healer failed to repair a damaged knee ligament.

Graham Dawe, the Cornish farmer whose no-holds-barred hooking duel with Brian Moore dominated English rugby play for the best part of a decade, has retired from top-class rugby with Bath at the age of 37. Capped five times by his country, Dawe, who has struggled with thumb and elbow injuries throughout his testimonial season, said: "The old body is telling me something. It's time to say goodbye."

SPORTING DIGEST

Ipswich start at full strength**Hockey**

Ipswich, the defending cup holders, will be at full strength for the semi-final visit of Clifton on Sunday, the former England international Vickie Dixon having completed her recovery from a calf injury, writes Bill Cotwill.

Clifton also expect to be at full strength following the decision of the Welsh defender Rachel O'Bryan to put club before a national training weekend. However, the Welsh management has decided to discipline O'Bryan, who is unlikely to join the national squad again before September.

Athletics

The nine-member East Asian Games Association selected yesterday to allow Australia to enter the third East Asian Games in Osaka in 2001. "The decision is only for Osaka and does not mean Australia will be allowed to join the association," it said in a joint release. The decision follows a series of tournaments organised by the second East Asian Games in the city of Pusan for a nine-day run.

China, Taiwan, South Korea, Mongolia, Guam, Kazakhstan and Macau voted for Australia's participation in Osaka. The other two members, Japan and Hong Kong, abstained.

China also expect to be at full strength following the decision of the Welsh defender Rachel O'Bryan to put club before a national training weekend. However, the Welsh management has decided to discipline O'Bryan, who is unlikely to join the national squad again before September.

The centre is Milton Keynes on 25 May.

Clifton will be looking for their third successive title in the Women's Under-19 Club Championship at Milton Keynes tomorrow. The strongest opposition in the five-team round-robin event is expected to come from Harlestone Magpies.

Baseball

AMERICAN LEAGUE: Milwaukee 1, Cleveland 0; Boston 11, Minnesota 3; Cleveland 7, Toronto 1; Detroit 12, Kansas City 3; Baltimore 3, Anaheim 2; Seattle 2, Texas 1; Boston 2, Pittsburgh 1; Chicago White Sox v Atlanta.

NATIONAL LEAGUE: San Francisco 3, Montreal 1; St Louis 2, Atlanta 3 (10 innings); Houston 1, Colorado 3; Florida 2, Atlanta 4; Angeles 4; Cincinnati 2; San Diego 6; Chicago 3.

Basketball

Chelsea Jags have re-signed forward Ricardo Leonard for next season's British Basketball League. Keeping the player makes Chester contenders for honours in England.

Jags expect to announce that their guard Hillary Scott will remain with the team, and the club are trying to re-sign the centre Billy Simpson, as well as rising England star Mark Williams.

Three Jags have agreed terms with the centre Jason Simon for the 1997-98 season. Simon spent the first part of last year in Belgium before joining the Tigers late in the season.

NBA Second-round play-off results: East: Atlanta 4, Boston 3; Denver 4, Miami 3; New York 5, Orlando 2; Milwaukee 4, Portland 2 (OT); Western Conference semi-final: Houston 101, Seattle 106. Series now 0-2.

National Basketball Association: Boston 100 (OT) 102 Atlanta 95; Atlanta 102, Boston 95; Denver 102, Portland 95; Milwaukee 102, Orlando 95; Portland 102, Denver 95; Denver 102, Portland 95.

Wednesday's late results: NBA: Boston 102, Atlanta 95; Denver 102, Portland 95; Milwaukee 102, Orlando 95; Portland 102, Denver 95; Atlanta 102, Denver 95.

WNBA: Seattle 89, Connecticut 88; Atlanta 85, Washington 84; Seattle 85, Washington 84.

World Cup: Argentina 75, Spain 74; France 75, Germany 74; Italy 75, Spain 74; Spain 75, France 74.

World Cup Group A: Italy 75, Spain 74; France 75, Germany 74; Spain 75, France 74.

World Cup Group B: Argentina 75, Spain 74; France 75, Germany 74; Spain 75, France 74.

World Cup Group C: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group D: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group E: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group F: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group G: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group H: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group I: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group J: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group K: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group L: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group M: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group N: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group O: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group P: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group Q: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group R: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group S: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group T: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group U: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group V: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group W: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group X: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group Y: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group Z: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group AA: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group BB: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group CC: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group DD: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group EE: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group FF: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group GG: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group HH: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group II: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group JJ: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group KK: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group LL: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group MM: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group NN: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

World Cup Group OO: France 75, Spain 74; Argentina 75, France 74; Spain 75, Argentina 74.

